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COMMONWEAL

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The politics of gemütlichkeit

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Stephen Hawking & the mind of God

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REPORTS:

Corral, El Salvador: **ANN MANGANARO**

Pulaski, Tennessee: **JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN**

BOOKS

DENNIS O'BRIEN on J.M. Cameron

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CORRESPONDENCE

A Campbell query

Richmond Hill, N.Y.

To the Editors: Perhaps Fred Siegel can be persuaded to explain why he describes Joseph Campbell as a "right-wing misanthrop" ["Blissed Out and Loving It," February 9]? I had never heard either term applied to Mr. Campbell before Mr. Siegel did so.

CHARLES WM. PHILLIPS

A Campbell quote

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: Before attacking Joseph Campbell's advice to "follow your bliss," I think Fred Siegel should reread Campbell to see what he meant by "your bliss." To me it seems clear in context that he was advising people to follow their deepest inner calling—what we Catholics would call our vocation. He insists on the deadly effect of turning aside from this, or of prostituting one's talents for money.

HENRIETTA DANA RAYMOND

The author replies:

I described Joseph Campbell as a "right-wing misanthrope" because Mr. Campbell was well known among his Sarah Lawrence colleagues for his racist and anti-Semitic sentiments. Mr. Phillips might want to look at the September 28, 1989, *New York Review of Books*, where Brendan Gill lays out part of the tawdry story, including Campbell's indifference to Hitler. Mr. Gill's article led to a widely discussed exchange on the PBS program "The Eleventh Hour" between Gill and Bill Moyers, whose series with Campbell, "The Power of Myth," had brought the Sarah Lawrence professor a national audience. Moyers' outburst in defense of his own injured innocence—he claimed to be entirely unaware of Campbell's sympathies—led to an article in the *New York Times*. It was hard to tell whether Moyers was sincere or simply furious at having been played the fool. But in either case, since he was unable to refute Gill's charges, his judgments and Campbell's reputation were effectively called into question.

I don't think anyone would argue with Henrietta Raymond's statement that Campbell was "advising people to follow their deepest inner calling." What is at issue is whether or how the outcomes of these choices are to be judged by God or man. Mr. Campbell's claims for asserting, in his words, "libido over credo," is fundamentally at odds with the demands of Judeo-Christian ethics. What Campbell, who insists that good and evil are indistinguishable, is preaching is a freedom for self-aggrandizement regardless of the consequences and beyond all possibilities of judgment. The scholarly apparatus aside, Campbell was just another hustler in the already overcrowded byways of the higher selfishness.

FRED SIEGEL

Rare coverage

Laurelton, N.Y.

To the Editors: Thank you for "Report from Beit Sahour" [January 26], an account of the Palestinian tax strike against the Israeli occupiers and the tactics the Israelis are using to put down the strike there as well as neighboring Bethlehem....

Of course I had been aware of the draconian seizures and arrests by the Israeli military in Beit Sahour and the closing of Bethlehem this Christmas season to outsiders for reasons of security. But I believed the former had been ended and the latter was genuinely necessary for safety. Until I read *Commonweal,* I was unaware that the seizures and planned pauperization of the Christian population were continuing and, by inference, that the closing of Bethlehem was really to hide from the world's view the brutal suppression imposed by the Israeli military. But then, how could I have known? My major sources for information about the *intifada* and Israel are the *New York Times, New York Newsday, Time,* and *Newsweek.* Clearly, they don't have the resources to match *Commonweal*'s.

Traditionally, Americans have been slow to recognize injustices supported and sanctioned by their government: Vietnam, El Salvador, Haiti, South Africa, Chile are just some of the countries where the might of the U.S. came down on the wrong side. Now Israel uses American arms and money to enslave a population. Will we Americans be able to shrug this one off too, or is our luck going to run out?

JOSEPH D. POLICANO

I–Thou, I–It

Huntington, N.Y.

To the Editors: I have a number of quibbles with M.J. and K.R. Himes's provocative article, "The Sacrament of Creation" [January 26]. First, why are arguments from self-interest regarding the ecosystem "fundamentally flawed"? Alfred North Whitehead observes somewhere that nature is inherently dull; it is our perception and appreciation that give nature any significance. To advocate the safeguarding of the environment (*our* environment) for its own sake is the kind of romanticism the authors complain about.

(Continued on page 229)

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COMMONWEAL 65

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By way of reply

We begin this promised reply to Governor Mario Cuomo's letter (*Commonweal*, March 23) by announcing that he is right: We do not agree with everything his letter said, and the letter does not contain everything we wish it would have. But our response will not deal only with some substantive disagreements and one major disappointment. First it must be said that much of what Mr. Cuomo writes is a welcome contribution to the all but intractable debate over abortion: his civil tone above all, but also his continued willingness to address the moral, political, and legal questions the issue raises. The governor expresses gratitude to the Catholic bishops for keeping abortion from becoming a non-issue. He too has played a part, particularly in emphasizing the complex nature of the relationship between law and morality. There are those who suspect him of complexifying the matter for the sake of obfuscation. Well, perhaps; but some who opt for oversimplification have in our view done greater damage to the body politic.

For his trouble, Mr. Cuomo has not only been found mistaken, but has been personally assailed by some of New York's bishops. No other public official addressing this or any other controverted issue has been treated with the disdain shown the governor. Is it because the governor has overstepped his place by presuming to articulate his position as a Catholic and a public official? Senator Daniel Moynihan has hinted as much; his prochoice votes have never been a problem, he says, because "I've never involved myself" in the abortion debate on the Senate floor. Is it possible that Cardinal O'Connor's personal feelings toward Mr. Cuomo have foreclosed a more constructive discussion between the governor and church officials? Is it possible that Bishop Vaughan's "prophetic" stance not only does not help to reduce the number of abortions but also prevents the emergence of a middle-way consensus that would?

The press attention given to Cuomo's letter highlights another aspect of the situation: the low tolerance of most reporters for serious discussion of the abortion question and the prochoice bias of New York newspapers. Of the papers we've seen, only the *Washington Post* reported what Cuomo actually said. *New York Newsday* made a reasonable stab. The city's other tabloids, the *Post* and the *Daily News*, downplayed Cuomo's ideas and stressed the conflict between him and the bishops, thereby attributing to him the stance they wanted him to take. The *New York Times*'s Albany reporter, as she has done previously, got an imprimatur for her interpretation by quoting a prochoice advocate. Between New York's episcopacy and New York's press, the governor has his problems.

And then he's got us. As already indicated, we were less than satisfied with the governor's treatment of certain sub-issues within the debate, as raised by *Commonweal*. Among them were the following:

- Counseling: The governor wrote that if strengthened regulations are needed

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to assure that clients of family planning clinics understand "the full range of options" available to women, he would favor their enactment. *Commonweal* suggested not only counseling that would point to abortion alternatives, but counseling that "fully describes...what we now know about fetuses and their development." Would this give some women second thoughts about their decision? We hope so; certainly it would give substance to the phrase, "fully informed consent." But we are not clear where the governor stands on the matter.

- Parental notification/consent: It is reasonable to stress, as the governor does, the real-world complexity of any such requirement applied to all cases. It is good to know that he will carefully consider any bill that comes before him on the matter. But it is equally reasonable to ask him to describe what bill he would sign into law, what provisions for individual circumstances he would ask.
- The governor's amicus brief: We did not criticize the brief the governor co-signed in *Turnock* v. *Ragsdale* because it was an argument for expanded abortion rights, as the governor suggests, but rather because it explicitly (and unnecessarily) asked the Court not to overturn *Roe* v. *Wade*: "It would be unprecedented for this Court, having recognized a fundamental constitutional right, to withdraw that right and throw the abortion issue back into the political arena." Democratic political theory and jurisprudence offer sound reasons for contending that abortion belongs in the political arena. What does the governor think?
- Viability testing: In supporting the viability testing allowed in *Webster*, we were not arguing for measures that would insure treatment for fetuses born alive after an attempted abortion (that goes without saying), but rather for a ban on third-trimester abortions. It may be that abortions at twenty-three weeks represent a small percentage of all abortions, but 1 percent of 1.5 million is 15,000 abortions. Testing at twenty weeks insures that the law would give the fetus the benefit of the doubt. Where does the governor stand?

Tedious as they may become in explication, these are not mere matters of detail. But we reserve our greatest emphasis for what we've described as our chief disappointment with his response. Casting about for an entry point, we turned to another great national debate and read these words:

"He who moulds public sentiment, goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions. He makes statutes and decisions possible or impossible to be executed."

Thus Abraham Lincoln, joining Judge Stephen Douglas in debate over the 1857 Dred Scott decision, which permitted the extension of slavery to the territories of the United States and determined that slaves had no constitutional protections. Was Judge Douglas personally opposed? "He does not give any opinion on that—but, because it has been decided by the Court....he is, and you are, bound to take it in your political action as law." Lincoln bore in on Douglas's silence about the content of Dred Scott because Lincoln not only opposed the decision but feared it would lead to a second one extending slavery to the states that prohibited it.

There are no perfect historical analogies, but this one is close. Douglas treated *Scott* v. *Sandford* as sacrosanct, the law of the land. *Roe* supporters pay *Roe* similar reverence. As in 1857 with the Dred Scott decision, so in 1990 with *Roe*: our political culture is again caught up in a fierce struggle over whether some human lives can be placed beyond the protection of the law. Public opinion is where it has always been, mostly in the middle, unwilling to have all abortions banned, yet troubled by the availability of abortion virtually on demand, the practical consequence of *Roe*. But, with the *Webster* decision of last July, a question that had seemed closed now appears to be open; the states are in a position to test how far the Supreme Court will reshape its 1973 ruling. Some states are testing on the far limits—trying to ban all abortions except in cases of rape or incest or a threat to the life of the mother; others are testing at the near margins, trying to end third-trimester abortions, requiring parental notification for minors seeking abortions, and introducing fuller counseling and informed consent procedures.

Shaping new state laws and regulations is a long, arduous, and conflict-filled process. Out of the ambivalence shared by a majority of Americans, some consensus needs to be formed—a consensus that will be shaped in part by the intelligence and persuasive skills that political leaders bring to the public debate. And now our question, our principal question: Why hasn't Governor Mario Cuomo stepped forth as a molder of consensus?

To ask the question is emphatically not to suggest that he has done nothing; on the contrary, he has done more than some of his critics to keep abortion from being treated as a settled question. His letter to *Commonweal* is only one example of his willingness to wrestle with the effort to reconcile a set of conflicting obligations as he sees them.

And yet, and yet. Those of us who believe abortion is wrong—and we accept that Governor Cuomo so believes—need to do many things. Although, in the face of social and cultural pressures favoring abortion, legislation cannot prohibit it, other legislative measures can help reduce the number of abortions; for example, measures to discourage unwanted pregnancies and to offer alternatives, as the governor recognizes; beyond these, steps to insure that the woman considering abortion is fully and honestly informed.

But public officials do not affect public policy only through legislation and regulation; they also effect change through their powers of persuasion and their use of the public platform they are accorded for purposes of political leadership. Like Mr. Lincoln, Mario Cuomo has the oratorical skills to enlighten and persuade the public. Note his words on child care in the State of the State message: "No infant should come into a world that does not care if it is fed properly, housed decently, educated adequately; where the blind or retarded child is condemned to exist rather than empowered to live."

Here is moral wisdom married to rhetorical power. On abortion itself, Mr. Cuomo offers less of both. If indeed he takes abortion seriously as a direct assault on life, the tenor of his finely calibrated comments do not finally seem to connect with that reality. "He who moulds public sentiment, goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions. He makes statutes and decisions possible or impossible to be executed."

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FIRST LIGHT

"And very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they came to the tomb" (Mark 16:2). There is scarcely a more evocative narrative sentence in the Gospels. Similarly, there is scarcely a more stunning natural moment than sunrise. The sun goes forth, in the words of the psalm, "as the bridegroom from the bridal chamber," and "runs its course from one end of the heavens to the other."

In *For All Mankind*, the new film-documentary on the Apollo mission to the moon, the photographer's eye is focused primarily elsewhere—not on sunrise or the heavens but on the planet earth itself, "this bath of blue and slake," as Gerard Manley Hopkins called it. In our times, there is perhaps no more beautiful and captivating an image than the one transmitted back to us by the astronauts, the image of the earth as seen from space. It is stunning, iconic even, in the sense of making us more aware of God's own perception of creation, letting us sense its glory in a way we had not before, as if we were seeing the earth on the very first day of creation.

There is something sacramental about the image as well. For it is given at precisely that moment in history when human beings most need to be reconciled to the earth. It is an image that can help effect such a change. In "Binsey Poplars," Hopkins described the devastation of a grove of favorite aspens: "Aftercomers cannot guess the beauty been." Such has been the environmental degradation in Eastern Europe during the Communist decades that Vaclav Havel addressed head on in his first presidential address. We now know the sterility fabricated by Communist architecture pales in comparison. But such environmental disregard is hardly limited to the East. We do not have to look beyond our own East River. It would not be stretching the thought of St. Paul to say that at this hour nearly all of nature is groaning and in travail.

This April 22, the Sunday following Easter, marks the twentieth anniversary of the first Earth Day. A fitting octave for Easter, any year. Yet the planet has become a poorer place in these past two decades. The March-April issue of *World Watch* concludes that "ecological degradation has reached global proportions"; that, despite a growing sense of the need to reverse this deterioration, no coherent vision has been developed in that period to challenge the patterns of our throwaway culture. In fact, our desperate attachmen t to upward mobility, and the growing sway of materialism now enveloping both West and East, has become so obsessive it may even displace our long-standing infatuation with the bomb as humanity's clearest form of death wish. As deadly as the possibility of nuclear war remains, the relentless pace of consumption on this finite orb has become even more threatening to human survival. According to *World Watch,* "Because of the strain on resources it creates, materialism simply cannot survive the [necessary] transition to a sustainable world."

World Watch might have been echoing John Paul II's recent World Day of Peace message, "Peace with All Creation." "Modern society will find no solution to the ecological problem unless it takes a serious look at its lifestyle," wrote the pope. "Simplicity, moderation, and discipline, as well as the spirit of sacrifice, must become a part of everyday life....An education in ecological responsibility is urgent: responsibility for oneself, for others, for the earth."

World Watch spells out this need more concretely and offers viable goals and possible means to achieve them. But the pope touches on two points that he and believers are uniquely positioned to provide: insight into the ethical dimension of the ecological crisis; and the sacramental character of nature itself. He notes that on the one hand, "the seriousness of the ecological issue lays bare the depth of man's [*sic*] moral crisis," while on the other, "Our very contact with nature has a deep restorative power."

Grace, wrote Hopkins, is "God's better beauty." At Easter we have no fuller intimation of how transforming and powerful God's beauty is. Yet with each new sunrise of each new earth day, our responsibility for living and sharing that intimation is wound inextricably more tightly with how we care for the earth itself. We need to rouse ourselves not only to earth's glory but to its need.

OUT WITH CONTEXTS

The *New York Times* reported last week that M.I.T., the Vatican of scientific triumphalism, was abandoning a bold and potentially subversive three-year experiment in curriculum reform. "Human Contexts of Science and Technology" was the general topic explored in a group of elective interdisciplinary courses on the social, cultural, and ethical dimensions of science and engineering. It was hoped the seminars would enlighten students to "the way in which social values influence the work we usually think of as purely disciplinary."

Apparently, students could care less. None of the courses was required for graduation, and with keen insight those being coaxed with contexts saw little of consequence in such work. We'll do our own temporizing, thank you, the students seemed to say.

Should we bemoan this lack of idealism? Perhaps. But its logic is irrefutable. A university identifies its hierarchy of values in its requirements. If colleges want moral questions to be taken seriously they need only make their students and faculty accountable.

Some professors have incorporated a discussion of values into their more traditional classes as a result of the well-meaning experiment. But the failure of M.I.T.'s attempt to bridge the gap between moral decision making and technical competence comes as no surprise. The purely instrumental rationalism that is the modern academy's creed leaves little room for any serious discussion of ethics or of anything as difficult to define as human value. Students soon learn questions of morality are by definition

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outside the intellectual enterprise of disinterested academic inquiry. An open mind too often means a mind unprejudiced by any convictions at all. Doesn't the limp phrase "human contexts" illustrate how squeamish the value-free academy is with the idea that something outside of technical mastery might command authority?

In most universities, morality is understood to be a purely private and subjective judgment. In the realm of social policy, the rhetoric of science and problem solving consequently prevails. Indeed, material progress and problem solving are the absolutes to which the so-called "human context" must conform. Since the value of human life cannot be proven empirically, how could it be any other way?

M.I.T. is to be commended for its valiant effort to bring intellectual commerce in touch with what one professor called "real life." But secular universities (and religious schools as well) will have to speak more explicitly about objective moral value if they hope to promote any kind of ethical literacy. Reason once again must be seen to serve humankind, not just those who can manipulate it efficiently. It must, in other words, be seen to have a human face, not the soul of a machine.

ET CETERA

A RUNE OF OUR OWN Rummaging through our last Cuomo-filled issue we came upon an unfortunate runkle. In our rumination on Andy Rooney's rehabilitation (March 23) a typo smeaked into the hemline. A ruse or a rumpus? rashly queried the rueful editor. Ruination and Rumania, rumbled the senior writer. A genuine runic inscription, pronounced the author.

We all make nistakes.

REPORT FROM TENNESSEE

REVOLUTIONARY PULASKI

OLD SOUTH & NEW

Pulaski, Tennessee, is a town under siege. In October 1989 about 175 Klansmen and members of the Aryan Nations converged on Pulaski, much against the will of the townspeople. The insignia of these latter-day white supremacists included the flags of the Confederacy and Nazi Germany. Their call was for a white revolution to wrest control of the United States from blacks, Jews, Catholics, and homosexuals. The reason Pulaski has earned the dubious honor of being a focal point for Aryan supremacists is that the Klan was born there in the terrible aftermath of the Civil War and the depredations of Reconstruction.

But this is the Pulaski of the New South and the reaction of Pulaski residents to the intrusion of white supremacists and racists was to meet at the Highland Baptist Church, under the rubric "Giles Countians United," and ask God to "grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the living of the days." Residents of all faiths prayed for an end to intolerance. At considerable cost to themselves, more than 130 businesses in Pulaski closed. They were prepared to forfeit a Saturday business day to back up their views. More than four thousand people signed a petition stating that they didn't want the Aryan Nations in their town. The community pulled together in other ways. Two high school football games were rescheduled in order to avoid any local festivity on the day that the Aryan Nations gathered.

Despite extraordinary steps the town took in October, the Aryan Nations and the Klan reconnoitered and converged on Pulaski again this January. But Pulaski was prepared for the offensive. The town had promoted a week-long series of gatherings dedicated to the theme of racial harmony. Once again local merchants refused to conduct business as usual. As one of the tactics promoted by Giles Countians United, the town sought and received an injunction against the Klan for violating the local parade ordinance. On January 13, the day of the afternoon march, Pulaski police chief Stanley Newton cited the Klan with violating a section of the ordinance which prohibited any parade, meeting, or demonstration. The Klan, of course, made the case that the ordinance deprives them of their right to free speech. The constitutionality of this measure is now a subject of federal court litigation.

During the march itself, however, local police allowed the parade to proceed and merely cited the Klan for contempt. A countermarch, sponsored by Giles Countians United, listened to a construction of the town's history different from the version preached by the Klan. Speakers emphasized a legacy that goes back to the nation's origins: The town was named for the Revolutionary War hero who came from Poland to fight at the side of the Founding Fathers against British rule. That revolutionary spirit was recalled and linked to contemporary struggles for freedom in Eastern Europe.

The lines of countermarchers outnumbered the Klan and Aryan Nations, who were greeted by steely silence from Giles Countians wearing the orange-armband insignia that has become the trademark of the anti-Klan Pulaskians. Giles Countians know that the invaders will be back, but they are proud that they can now mobilize larger crowds than the Klan. As they await the next intrusion, they are promoting community events on the themes of racial brotherhood and sisterhood.

The New South is not all new, as I have occasion to know. In the course I teach at Vanderbilt University, for example, I am startled at hearing unabashed and unapologetic professions of anti-Catholicism. The image of the Catholic church held by at least some of Vanderbilt's students seems to have got stuck somewhere in the sixteenth century with the issue of Tetzel and indulgences. During a recent discussion of the abortion issue, students—all women—spoke forcefully and as if from a fund of knowledge about routine excommunications, repression, and claims of papal infallibility. The right-to-life position, which

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several of the students tied to the Catholic church and to meddling priests, got categorized as a pernicious form of manipulation, whereas the prochoice position was represented as a pure instance of rational persuasion and commitment to all things Americans hold dear, particularly rights.

It does give one pause—why is it that anti-Catholicism remains the one acceptable prejudice within the American academy? The students, open in their professions of anti-Catholicism, would never so boldly proclaim anti-Semitic or racist sentiments. When I spoke to a few of the graduate students in the Department of Political Science about this phenomenon, they told me that the view of the Catholic church that many of them grew up with in their fundamentalist congregations was very much that of a benighted, oppressive, and much-to-be-feared cohort of priests and nuns out to bamboozle the innocent and to undermine the bases of American life.

In my view, though, this remnant of old-style nativism is an anomaly. When I moved to Nashville, many of my Northeastern friends thought I was heading toward that place on ancient maps where the known world ends and *terra incognita* begins; where, the mapmakers believed, "there be dragons." Yet on a number of issues, especially race, the New South is far ahead of what might be called, at this point, the Old North. With demographers and political observers reporting that a reverse migration of blacks back to the South is now occurring, the contrast between North and South on race questions will tilt even more in favor of the New South.

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN

Jean Bethke Elshtain is the Centennial Professor of Political Science at Vanderbilt University. Her most recent book is Women and War *(Basic Books).*

LETTER FROM EL SALVADOR

ONE SUNDAY IN CORRAL
WHEN CITIZENS ARE TARGETS

José Dolores Serrano died on February 11. He was eleven years old. His middle name means sorrow, pain; fitting name for a child of El Salvador. I never saw his face, in life or in death. I only saw what was left of his body; his right leg, attached by shreds of skin to a section of ribs; his left foot; no arms, no hands, no head, no face; only pieces of flesh and hair scattered across the ground, splashed across the wall in the one-room house where his body was blown apart. Blanca Lidia, two years old, her body still cradled in the arms of her dead father Anibal, in another corner of the same house; her face too was completely destroyed by one of the two rockets that tore through the building. Isabel, nine years old, was lying close to her little sister Anabel Beatriz, one year old: at least I could see their faces.

These five died and sixteen more persons (five adults, eleven children) were wounded that Sunday morning as Salvadoran Air Force helicopters and A-37s strafed and rocketed their village, Corral de Piedra in the northern "province" of Chalatenango. Four families had taken refuge in the tiny brick house when the bombardment began, because it seemed more secure than their shacks of adobe or plastic and tin. Everyone who was in the house when the rockets hit was either killed or wounded.

I awoke that morning, as I have so many mornings in recent months, to the sounds of combat nearby. Shortly thereafter, I heard helicopters arriving, and then the A-37 fighter-bombers. I kept stepping outside my house to watch; the helicopters circling, strafing, rocketing; the two bombers climbing and diving in huge arcs. I even got out my camera to take some pictures, since the bombardment seemed unusually heavy, and perilously close to the recently repopulated village of Corral de Piedra, only four or five kilometers from my house in Guarjila. There are about five hundred people living in Corral, all Salvadorans who had been in refugee camps in Honduras for eight years or more, after having been driven from their homes by the indiscriminate bombings and brutal massacres the Salvadoran military carried out in the early 1980s. They had returned to this area of Chalatenango in late October 1989.

There was a lull in the fighting and I went back inside to my Sunday-morning housecleaning. Within a few minutes I heard a jeep roar up, honking, and then the voice of my friend Cathy, a School Sister of Notre Dame who had been living in Corral de Piedra since early December. "Ann, come with me—there are dead and wounded in Corral!"

I thought for a moment that she meant soldiers or FMLN combatants. "Not civilians?" I asked.

"Yes, civilians, and lots of them!" she answered, as I grabbed the emergency equipment I keep in my house. I called to one of the health promoters who lives nearby to come with me. As we raced back in Cathy's jeep another car passed us headed the other way, driven by another volunteer church worker in the area, carrying four of the most severely wounded to the local hospital.

We arrived in Corral de Piedra to a scene of anguish and confusion: friends and families standing, staring, sobbing. The wounded had been carried to some nearby shacks. I took a quick look at each one, and decided it would be best to take everyone to the hospital. While the health promoters and other volunteers from the community helped the wounded into the jeep and the Guarjila cooperative's truck, I went with Cathy to look at the house the rockets had hit, and the dead within it. The two vehicles then proceeded to the hospital. We stopped briefly in Guarjila so that I could get my identification papers. To my amazement and horror, as I walked back toward the jeep a C-47—a huge, lumbering plane—flew over. It began to strafe while still over Guarjila and continued firing as it flew toward Corral de Piedra while we continued with our mission.

At the hospital I tried to make sure that everyone was appropriately treated and also to gather the names and ages of those who had died. Two women and a thirteen-year-old boy were quickly transferred to the public hospital in San Salvador. One man, two women, and four children were admitted to the hospital

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in Chalatenango City. Five children were treated and released. One child, a four-year-old named José Alfredo, needed to be transferred to the children's hospital in San Salvador but there was no ambulance to transport him. So Cathy and I took him, his IV bottle hanging from the jeep's roll bar. We took with us as well Rosa Marina, a beautiful four-month-old baby who had been released after her head wounds were sutured. Her wounds were superficial but she seemed lethargic and there was no one at hand to care for her. It was her father and two-year-old sister who had died a few hours before, and her mother was one of the wounded in the ambulance en route to San Salvador.

Amid the blur of subsequent events, a few impressions stand out starkly:

(1) In spite of the testimony of all the eyewitnesses (both those who witnessed the bombardment, including Cathy and two other North American Sisters, and those who arrived later that day, including several journalists and the members of two human-rights monitoring organizations), the armed forces and Salvadoran government proceeded with a campaign of lies, distortions, and misinformation which for me only magnified the horror of the initial events. Salvadoran newspapers, radio, and television all carried the official armed forces versions: that the deaths and injuries were caused by a catapult-launched FMLN explosives device; that the civilians had been caught in crossfire; that it was "not yet known if the dead were civilians or FMLN terrorists." It did not matter how many eyewitnesses there were, how much shrapnel from rockets was recovered at the site (including pieces imprinted with the word "rocket" in English), nor that similar shrapnel was removed from the bodies of the wounded. The technique of the "big lie" is alive and well in El Salvador. Finally, after four or five days, confronted with the massive and mounting evidence, the head of the armed forces was forced to admit that "a rocket" fired by "a helicopter" had caused the deaths, and that the families would be offered an indemnity.

(2) Representatives of *Tutela Legal*, the human-rights monitoring office of the Catholic Archdiocese of San Salvador, were barred from entering the area on Monday, February 12, and finally got through only two days later. On that Wednesday and Thursday I was privileged to accompany them on their tour of the area and to observe their meticulous investigation. I had already seen the house where the two rockets hit, and the mangled bodies within it. But, walking through Corral de Piedra with the *Tutela Legal* staff, I was stunned to note at least fourteen holes in the earth, all still filled with shrapnel, where rockets had fallen close to other houses. It is astounding that only one house was hit, that there were not twenty deaths and four hundred injuries. It became clear beyond doubt that this was no accident. No isolated, badly aimed single rocket fell in the village of Corral de Piedra. It was subjected to a deliberate, intense, prolonged bombardment.

(3) This event did not occur in isolation. It occurred in the context of a heavy military operation in and around the villages in this part of Chalatenango. There have been almost daily fire fights and aerial bombardments near one or more of the communities. Seven civilians had been wounded in Guarjila, two in Los Ranchos, and four in Las Vueltas prior to this incident. Four more have been wounded subsequently: a five-year-old girl and a thirty-two-year-old by "stray bullets" from ground fire on February 16; a nine-year-old boy (badly injured) and his seventy-one-year-old grandfather (less so) on February 20 by a mine. All through January I had felt the tension mount within these villages, as bombings occurred more frequently, as more and more civilians were wounded. I found myself filled with a sense of doom and foreboding which has now proved grimly clairvoyant.

The terrible truth is that the FMLN are not the only targets of the Salvadoran armed forces. The murder of the six Jesuits and two women in November was not some strange, sad aberration within a basically decent system. The gruesome deaths of José Dolores Serrano and his four companions were no regrettable accident. Jesuit priests and *campesino* children become legitimate military targets for a military and civilian power structure rooted in injustice and characterized by consistent and brutal repression of those who threaten it.

ANN MANGANARO

Ann Manganaro is a member of the Sisters of Loretto and a physician. She has been working in El Salvador since 1988.

OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

A MANIFESTO FOR MARXISTS

NOTHING TO LOSE BUT YOUR CAREERS

Since everything, as the ecologists remind us, is connected with everything else, we should not be surprised to learn that upheavals in far-away lands threaten career prospects in the United States.

The decline and fall of communism in Eastern Europe represents a grave threat to the careers of millions of government bureaucrats and party functionaries in those countries. Everyone of course knows this, and due attention has been give to this fact in every in-depth analysis of the amazing events which have been transforming the Soviet Union and its erstwhile satellites.

But what has not received due notice is the threat the collapse of communism represents to the careers of thousands of American academics. Numerous historians, sociologists, political scientists, even an occasional economist and literary critic, consider themselves to be—in some sense of this elusive word—Marxists, or at least semi-Marxists. To be sure, they don't consider themselves to be Communists; that would be laughable; long ago the surgical separation between the Communist party (a vulgar thing) and Marxism (a refined thing) was achieved. But however careful

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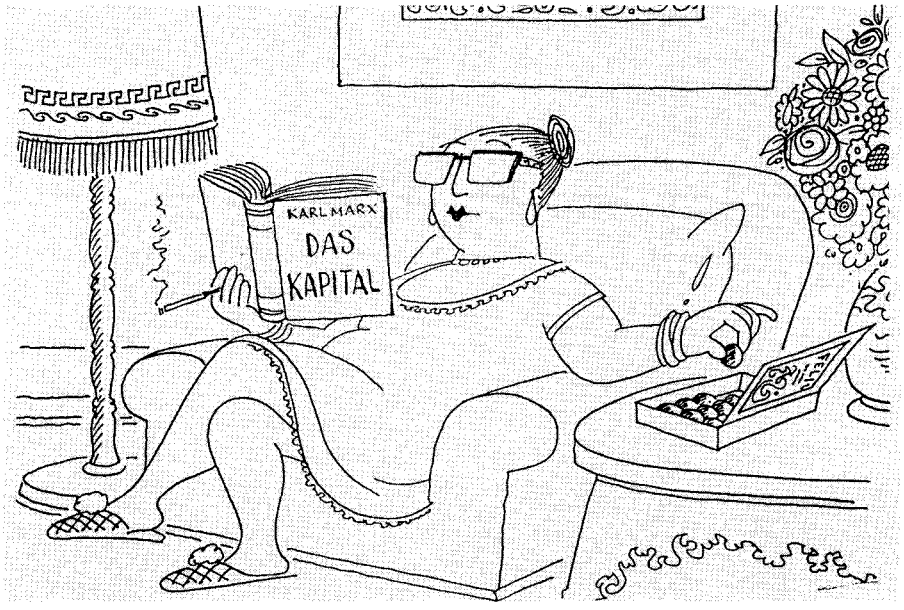
these academic Marxists have been to keep their skirts clear of the mud of everyday communism, the question remains: Can their careers continue to thrive once the great movement that took Karl Marx as its prophet and author of its sacred scripture stumbles and falls?

This is not the first moment in the twentieth century when theoretical Marxists have had to distance themselves from communism. By the 1930s, as the dark night of Stalinist orthodoxy closed in on the Soviet Union and the Comintern, Marxists of the anti-Stalinist type formulated versions of Marxism which allowed them to differentiate themselves from Stalinism. They advertised themselves as true Marxists, while Stalin was characterized as at best a pseudo-Marxist, at worst an anti-Marxist.

Thus by the time of the Hitler-Stalin Pact (late August 1939) it had become virtually impossible to be at the same time a Communist and an intellectually respectable person; for to be a Communist was to be a Stalinist; and to be a Stalinist was to subscribe to an interpretation of history and nature that was simplistic in content and servile in form. Yet no one had to give up being a Marxist on that account. By then the distinction between being a Marxist and being a party member was sufficiently clear and renouncing the latter no longer involved renouncing the former, nor did embracing the doctrine entail embracing the party.

This distinction between party and doctrine, already clear in the last decade or so of Stalin's reign, became more striking still following Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin in the Twentieth Party Congress in early 1956 and the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian revolt late that same year. Henceforth the Communist party became increasingly ridiculous in the eyes of Western intellectuals; at the same time Marxism as a doctrine continued to be treated with respect, even experiencing a revival when students from the 1960s entered into academic and scholarly careers in the 1970s and 1980s.

Of course there was never a single, dominant interpretation of Marxism during these decades. Quite the contrary, there were, it seemed, nearly as many constructions of Marxism as there were Marxists.



There was the amiable Marxism of Erich Fromm, the existential (and quite unamiable) Marxism of Jean-Paul Sartre, and the less celebrated Marxisms of a hundred and one academics. The texts of Marx, it turned out, were no less susceptible to diversity of interpretation than were the texts of the Bible; and after Stalin there was no one who even pretended to be the pope of Marxism.

Still the question remains: Can theoretical Marxism, no matter how distinct from the Communist movement, retain its prestige once that movement collapses? Can the soul survive the death of the body? True enough, the soul has given the appearance of living independently of the body for some time now. But is this real independence? Or only the illusion of independence? The time of testing is at hand.

Marxist theory, remember, was first taken seriously by the world precisely 100 years ago, not because it was so intellectually compelling a theory that the world could not but attend to it, but because it was the theory that informed and inspired a great political party, the Social Democratic party of Germany, which had just emerged from a dozen years underground with repeal in 1890 of Bismarck's antisocialist law of 1878. Never until today, then, has theoretical Marxism had to face the prospect of living in a world devoid of a great Marxist political movement. Even now, of course, it doesn't quite live in such a world; after all, the Communist party of China still survives, not to mention Fidel, who, as ever, sits ninety miles off the American coast. But the hour is late.

The day has finally arrived when we can begin to evaluate Marxism dispassionately. We can critically examine it as a philosophy, as a sociology, as a theory of history, the same way we critically evaluate other philosophies, sociologies, and histories—that is, without being influenced in our judgments by any hopes or fears we may happen to have regarding communism.

And what will that dispassionate evaluation reveal? I say it with some regret, since I've spent many an enthralling hour studying Marx over a period of many years, but my guess is that we'll finally conclude that for the past century—the century of the "red menace"—Marx has been overrated as a thinker by both friend and foe. He hasn't been overrated as a dynamic force, as a kind of secular prophet. Far from it. As a prophetic force he stood in the first rank, shaking the world as few others have ever shaken it. But as a thinker he was third-rate, not the first-rate man his admirers imagine him to have been, nor even the second-rate thinker his enemies grant him to have been.

My recommendation, therefore, to American academic Marxists is that they diversify their intellectual investments, for their Marxist expertise is about to become a drag on the market. □

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RESURRECTION & REAL PRESENCE

TO BE IN CHRIST IS TO LIVE IN COMMUNION

ROBERT P. IMBELLI

Recently, I encountered a woman, a nun, who had spent the better part of a year living an almost solitary existence, a "desert" year given over to prayer and communion with God. Speaking of her prayer, she surprised me by saying that a staple of her prayer life was the Creed; not merely because it formed a living link with the whole body of Christ, but because she prayed the Creed as, in its essence, a "love song."

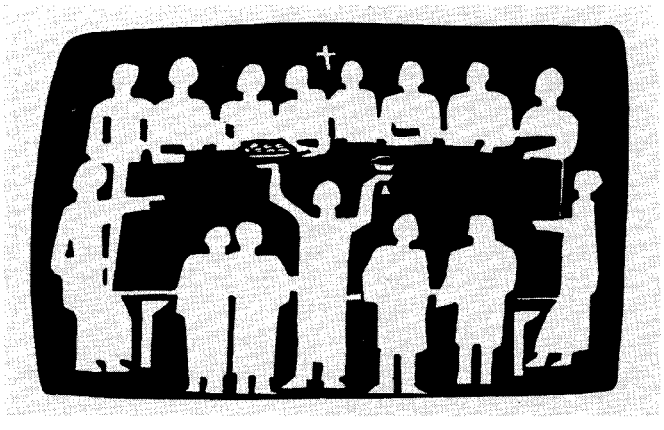
Once I thought about it, it made perfect sense. Whatever we confess of God in the Creed is not dry propositions, but divine praises. We proclaim God who creates, out of goodness all that is seen and unseen. A recent review in *Commonweal* [February 23] on the search for "dark matter" in the universe by Chet Raymo reminded us that "the entire visible universe is but a drop in the cosmic sea." In the Creed, we thank God, who, out of utmost compassion, sends the dearly Beloved to dwell in our midst; the Beloved who, for the sake of our salvation and well-being, offers himself in life and in death and is raised to new life. In the Creed, we glorify God who establishes us in truth by the gift of the Holy Spirit; the Spirit who effects the communion of saints, by *being* the forgiveness of sin and everlasting life. All these themes are but multiple variations on the one *cantus firmus* which is God's love: indeed, the one incomprehensible mystery of the triune God who is love.

Once intimated, the point was self-evident. Had not Johann Sebastian Bach shown as much long ago? For among the most sublime of his cantatas, the one which, in a sense, sums up all the rest, is the "Credo" of his *B Minor Mass*: a "Credo" which is surely a cantata of love. The music and words sing out the wonder of creation and redemption, the alpha and omega of our origin and destiny: coming forth from love and called to love's wedding feast.

Bach's "Credo" structures a cosmos and proclaims it a work of love. And the hinge of the whole is the Resurrection of Christ: "*et resurrexit tertia die*." The brilliance of Bach's trumpets but underscores the tradition's conviction: "Christ, raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer holds dominion over him" (Rom. 6:9). The trumpets herald the dark luminosity of resurrection, recapitulating both seen and unseen, *visibilium et invisibilium*. For the appearances of the Risen One provide sacramental glimpses into a world unseen, from which come healing, grace, and peace.

Without Christ's Resurrection the universe of love is but wishful myth, well-meant illusion. The Creed, as hymn of love, hinges on the Resurrection. On this hinge swings wide the stone set before the tomb, opening an abyss before which the women stand and tremble. "He is risen; he is not here" (Mark 16:6). Joyful affirmation or terrifying revelation? Without doubt both; but both ever together—as Rudolf Otto speaks of the Holy as ever evoking both dread and desire. "Maria"..."Rabboni": the ecstatic recognition, rejoicing at having been found, which is followed at once by the imperative, "Do not cling to me...go and tell" (cf. John 20:16-17). Here vision impels to mission; revelation serves transformation.

Resurrection faith stretches heart and mind to the breaking point, as they stagger under the unbearable lightness of being. Is it any wonder that we frequently retreat before the mystery, reducing it to more manageable perspectives. And so, certain scholars contend, "He is risen into the kerygma"—betraying thereby their inordinate appetite for ideas. No resurrection there, only a ghostly apparition. Or, some ecclesiastical functionaries



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insist, "He is risen into the institutional church"—displaying, by the very contention, a rather petrified imagination. That would merely exchange one tomb for another. Or, others of more liberationist bent cry, "He is risen as the people"—manifesting their often havoc-wreaking innocence. A provocative resuscitation, perhaps, but no true resurrection. But against all infringement of the mystery the angel stands adamant: "He is risen; he is not here!"

Traces there may be in "proclamation" and "people" and even, however implausible this may appear, in "institution." But these, in themselves, are but footprints left by the Beloved in his passage, as John of the Cross knew and suffered. They press us onward:

> Pouring forth a thousand graces, he passed these
> groves with haste;
> and fixing them with a glance, transforming them
> in his image,
> he clothed them with beauty.

For in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ we confront new creation, transformed existence. As Sebastian Moore has written: "It's he that we are experiencing, but extraordinarily, in a way that takes us beyond ourselves, into a new world." Between the old and the new there is both continuity and discontinuity, identity in difference. All the meditation of the centuries-long tradition is but *lectio divina et continua* upon Paul's wonder-filled rhetoric in First Corinthians:

> What is sown a perishable thing is raised imperishable.
> Sown in humiliation, it is raised in glory.
> Sown an animate body, raised a spiritual body (15: 42-44).

Body, most certainly, but not merely resuscitated body: body transformed in the Spirit of God, imbued with God's power and glory. Body, assuredly: but in the full Hebraic sense of relational identity, no longer limited or thwarted, but diaphanous to Spirit. Body indeed: but motile and pyrogenic, penetrating closed spaces and the confines of hearts. Paradoxical physicality: like "silent music...dinning solitude—*música callada...soledad sonora*" (as John of the Cross exclaims with eloquent stammer).

Here, if anywhere, we encounter real presence. Presence so real as to be palpable: yet so discreet as to demand discernment. "Were not our hearts burning within us?" the disciples ponder at the close of Luke's narrative of the Risen One's appearance on the road to Emmaus. It is the recognition-confession which Christian experience and discipleship will reiterate through the centuries.

A contemporary student of the New Testament writes: "The resurrection experience that gave birth to the Christian movement was the experience of the continuing presence of a personal, transcendent, and transforming power within the community" (Luke Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament,* Fortress). This personal, embodied presence of the Risen Christ defines the newness of the new covenant, binding eyewitnesses and those to whom they testify into one body of love, at-oned in a common Eucharist: "Praised be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in great mercy has begotten us anew into a living hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.... You have not seen Christ, yet you love him, and believing in him now, even without seeing, your joy overflows, a joy beyond all telling" (1 Pet. 1:3-8).

There is simply no Christian faith without the density of real presence. If Christ be not raised, preaching and faith alike are useless, empty, and vain. So Paul told the Corinthians; and there is no reason to retract his assessment today. For the Christian the unique access to God is *through* Jesus Christ, God's Beloved and our Lord, who *lives* and reigns now. The living Christ *is* the presence of God in human flesh, temple in whom all God's creatures can nest, bridegroom who is unique beloved of each. If Paul, in Romans 8, proclaims ecstatically the presence of love from which nothing can sunder—"neither death nor life, neither powers nor potentates, neither zenith nor abyss"—he makes patent that this presence is rendered real and irrevocable in the death and Resurrection of Christ.

The Christian life, the life of discipleship, *is* life in Christ, not metaphorically, but really; not imitatively, but participatively. What baptism constitutes, the life of discipleship realizes—not without cost. For the only way to resurrection is the way of the cross; the only authentic mode of discipleship is the one that retraces the journey of the Lord—or, better, relives it, by living it in Christ. Perhaps no more moving contemporary witness can be found than that of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his *Letters and Papers from Prison.* In his letter of August 21, 1944, Bonhoeffer achieves a realization which the disciple must ever appreciate anew, in each new circumstance of his or her life. "The key to everything is the 'in Christ.' All that we rightly expect from God and pray for is to be found in Jesus Christ....we must always live close to the presence of God, for that is newness of life; and then nothing is impossible for all things are possible with God...."

The new life in the living Christ is relational existence. The very identity of the Christian is to be in relation to Christ: "christened," that is, "anointed" through Christ with God's Holy Spirit. So intimate is this union with the living Lord that the church's mystical tradition—from Origen through Bernard of Clairvaux to John of the Cross—found commentary upon the biblical Song of Songs to be the least inadequate way of expressing the unique love binding Beloved to those he enlivens.

Yet it is also clear that this relation to Christ is not individualistic in any exclusive sense. Indeed, to be "in Christ" is, primarily, to live in communion: related to self and other through Christ, becoming member of one body. And the goal intended by Christ's redemptive love is the gathering of the whole body, the "many" of the new covenant in his blood. This the New Testament and the Patristic age fully appreciated. How can real presence not be foundationally inclusive? How can the new temple in the Spirit, which is the risen body of Christ, not embrace all the nations in its ampleness?

Not conflict, but profound harmony, issues from the confession of Christ as unique Beloved of each and as head of the entire body of believers who draw their life from him. In the Fourth Gospel's magnificent portrait of Jesus' hour of glory as his exaltation upon the cross, the consummation of the good news is the pouring forth of the life-giving water and blood from the

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pierced side of Christ upon his mother and beloved disciple. These, the primordial witnesses and recipients of the new life in the Spirit, are inseparably particular individuals and representatives of the community: humanity regenerated.

Only the advent of modernity, articulated with devastating genius by Descartes, saw the propagation of an atomistic individualism which loosed the relational bonds between persons, even as it fragmented matter and spirit into separate and competing spheres. "Spiritual body," body transformed in Spirit, becomes an incomprehensible symbol in a Cartesian world, regulated by "clear and distinct ideas" that serve the purposes of power and control. Is it any coincidence that commentary on the Song of Songs, as consummate and privileged evocation of the universe of love, soon ceases in a West avid for the subjugation of supposedly spiritless nature and peoples?

A church, founded on resurrection faith and nourished by real presence, can only be an adversarial witness to this one-dimensional myopia of modernity. For the vision of the Risen One is, as Paul exemplifies, ardent with expectation, opening a new horizon of hope for all creation. Christ, the new Adam become life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), is himself the first-born of a multitude of brothers and sisters (Rom. 8:29). The Resurrection of Christ thus marks a new beginning whose repercussions touch not only humanity, but the entire created universe, now groaning and longing for the appearance and ministration of sons and daughters after God's own heart (Rom. 8:19).

The real presence of Christ is, therefore, principle and sustaining power of the realization of humanity's vocation to divine filiation and universal reconciliation. This corporate destiny is confessed with unsurpassed boldness in the Epistle to the Ephesians, whether by Paul himself or a disciple who had appropriated and extended Paul's mystical vision.

Remarkable, in the first chapter of Ephesians, is the author's insistent prayer for a sense of wisdom and discernment, a real apprehension (in Newman's terms) of the power of God revealed in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. A power now at work in believers! And the purpose of that power is set forth, in chapter 4, with a depth we still scarcely fathom. It is nothing less than the building up of Christ's body, the realization of that one perfected person, who is Christ come to completion (Eph. 4:12-13).

The power in question, the power who is Holy Spirit, is—and this is crucial—persuasive, not coercive. Its manner is a bold, if compassionate speaking of the truth (Eph. 4:15); and, precisely by so doing, granting to all freedom and scope to grow into Christ, the alpha and omega of maturation in the Spirit. One need not naively deny that an untransformed world still falls under the illusory sway of principalities and powers. Though Christ's victory renders them ultimately impotent, they still make empty show of majesty and mastery. But their being, if not their immediate effect, is ultimately insubstantial. On those occasions when the program of truth-telling seems actually to have been translated into practice, and appeal is made to persuasion rather than coercion (as in the case of President Václav Havel of Czechoslovakia), one thrills to the promise the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, offers ever anew.

The singular sense of union between the Risen Christ and his disciples of every age provides the key to the distinctive Patristic scriptural interpretation and pastoral practice; and its continued relevance today. For the mystery, which Scripture illuminates, is, finally, the "whole Christ." And the making of the whole Christ is, at once, the unmerited gift of God and the urgent responsibility of believers. Pope Saint Leo the Great but recapitulates, in this regard, the common conviction of the undivided tradition of East and West:

> Beloved, it cannot be doubted that the Son of God assumed human nature so intimately that there is one single Christ in the one who was first-born of all creation, and also in all his saints. The head cannot be separated from the members, nor can the members from the head. That is why we daily celebrate the Lord's pasch with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. The leaven of our old malice is thrown away, and a new creature drinks deep and feeds upon the Lord himself. For our participation in the body and blood of Christ has this effect: it makes us become what we receive. It enables us, with our whole being, to bear him, in whom and with whom we have died and been buried and risen again.

The privileged place of encounter and exchange between the Risen Christ and Christians remains the eucharistic celebration. Here is enacted the *admirabile commercium*. Here, if anywhere, is celebrated real presence at its highest pitch. Liturgical celebration does not substitute for what the Spirit may be doing elsewhere; but provides its norm and substantiation in Christ. Some might even say: its transubstantiation.

I know, of course (and have myself rehearsed) all the laments concerning tasteless liturgy, unhappy homilies, unmemorable music. And yet, for all the legitimate concern about the *opus operantis* (what *we* do as presiders, ministers, people), the primacy lies with the *opus operatum* (what *God* has done and is doing through the Risen Christ). Can we dismiss, as only Orthodox exaggeration, what Alexander Schmemann urges: "The liturgy is, before everything else, the joyous gathering of those who are to meet the Risen Lord and to enter with him into the bridal chamber"? Can faith in resurrection and real presence entail any less?

That is why the full panoply of the Easter Vigil is required merely to initiate us into the real presence of the Risen Lord, in the midst of the community which he constitutes and continues to found by the outpouring of his Spirit. This "Mother of Vigils," this unique "Mass of the Resurrection," is the measure and point of reference for every liturgical celebration, however modest. For the Easter Vigil shows that all creation is implicated in the coming to birth of Christians, by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, in the womb of the church. Nothing is omitted: fasting and feasting, silence and music, darkness and light, water, oil, bread, and wine. All body forth intimations of the Lord's transformed body, even as they conspire to effect the transformed embodiment of believers. Still, for all the splendid allusion and evocation, the issue remains, ultimately, one of faith. As John of the Cross

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insists, only the dark night of faith can be prelude to Easter dawn. And faith finally relies not upon rational demonstration but upon spiritual discernment.

The rest is in the living. But, since it has long been my peculiar habit to meditate with the Bible in one hand and the *New Yorker* in the other, let me close this meditation in like fashion.

A recent issue of the *New Yorker* (February 26) featured a remarkable poem by Czeslaw Milosz entitled, "Creating the World." Toward its end, the celestials address mortals thus:

Oh, to have so little, nothing except feasts of love!
How feeble your defense against the abyss!

And the poem's last stanza, summing up mortals' life on earth, reads:

And the sun rises and the sun sets,
And the sun rises and the sun sets
While they go on running, running.

Now, in counterpoint to this depiction of the human condition, a fugal variation upon a Johannine theme.

Early on the first day of the week, the sun having barely risen, Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved came running to the tomb. Heart pounding, ears ringing with Magdala's message, they came running, running. Then, the one whom Jesus loved, in a final burst of desire, outstripped the other and reached the tomb first. The linen cloths, binding the dead, lay discarded, useless now. But the cloth that had covered the face of the Beloved was not found with the rest. It lay carefully folded in its own place apart. And love, taking all in at a glance, believed in the sun that never sets. □

THE POLITICS OF GEMUTLICHKEIT

THE GDR & THE COMFORTS OF UNIFICATION

STEPHEN BROCKMAN

To this day no one has done an adequate job of describing the Berlin Wall. Why? Because it is more than a wall. It was, for the twenty-eight years of its significant existence, like the end of the universe, and who can describe that? It was a break in dimensions, more part of science fiction than political science or geography. Or was it, rather, the geography of the human soul—the closing up of all human horizons and possibilities? How ironic that now this vanishing point is simply being chipped away and sold in supermarkets and department stores, as if it were a physical object like any other. It would be a worthy subject for a drawing by Escher. A few slabs of the Wall may be kept standing for historical purposes, but they will mean nothing, because either the Wall is everything or it is nothing. Either it is the set of all contingencies, or it is itself merely contingency. During my recent visit to West and East Germany, a friend admitted to me that he had never really thought about the Wall, even though he lived only a couple blocks from it. No more than you or I would think about the break in space-time or the point at which the universe ceases and nothingness begins.

I flew into Berlin on the last day of the old year. It was damp and foggy and flying out of the sunshine above the clouds into the misty imprecision below, I could not help but think of the opening scene of *Triumph of the Will*, with Hitler's plane flying out of the clouds into Nuremberg. It was a heavy, somber, entirely Germanic day. The American movie theater owner sitting next to me was busy recording the entire approach on his Camcorder. He planned to be with the multitudes that evening at the Brandenburg Gate, ringing out the old decade and ushering in the new age of freedom, uncertainty, and progress, not missing a single historic moment with his video equipment.

At the Tegel Civilian Airport three friends were waiting for me, a pan-German reception committee: an East German man, an East German woman, and a West German man—the latter two a couple. Four years earlier a different reception committee had taken me as far as the Friedrichstrasse train station and stood waving as I crossed into the no man's land of the border area. Back then, the ride from Friedrichstrasse to the Berlin Zoo was a trip from one station to another in the same city, but in different worlds. I had to make the journey alone, as my friends stood waving and crying on the other side. Now the child who had not yet been born as my pregnant friend waved to me so long ago is a smart little girl in *Kindergarten*, and she and her mother can travel wherever and whenever they want to. I had not thought such a thing was possible those four long years ago. Now it seems like the most normal thing in the world to be meeting East Germans in West Berlin.

Once again I am surprised by my own lack of surprise at meeting old friends here, where I had never hoped to see them. After the greetings and hugs are over, my first question to the East Germans is: Does this feel like home to you, West Berlin?

"*Auf alle Fälle*." By all means, says the woman. This is my home. It's Germany.

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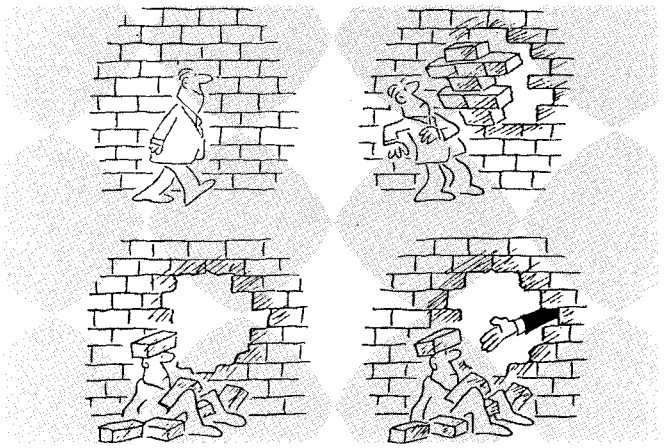

"*Das würde ich nicht so saqen.*" I wouldn't quite put it that way, says the man. I don't feel at home here.

The West German remains silent.

In spite of an invitation to stay in Berlin and celebrate New Year's Eve at the Brandenburg Gate along with everyone else, I decide to head down to Leipzig, where other friends have organized a quieter New Year's party. Crossing the border this time is only marginally easier than crossing the border other times. There is a large crush of people at Friedrichstrasse, all waiting to get into East Berlin to celebrate the New Year under the Brandenburg Gate and in the dead zone around the Wall where the mines used to be. It takes an hour to get to the front of the line. I pass the time harmlessly enough talking to a French engineer about Umberto Eco, poststructuralism, and the hyperreality of the Hearst Castle in California, which he has just gotten back from. We wonder if there will now be a hyperreal Berlin Wall somewhere in the Arizona desert. When I get to customs I have to open up my suitcase. The guards want to make sure I'm not smuggling in bundles of East German currency to further destabilize the faltering economy.

The train ride to Leipzig is so familiar that I know it with my eyes closed. Trains leave from the Lichtenberg station, pass through the Schönefeld Air Field and then the devastated moonscape of the Soviet army base at Forst Zinna, with its dead trees, its firing ranges, its landscape gouged and dug up by tank tracks and explosions. Then comes "Lutherstadt Wittenberg," with its beautiful towers coming into profile just before the train crosses over the Elbe River. And then, getting into the heart of industrial East Germany, smoggy Bitterfeld, center of the chemical industry—and, for a brief moment in the early 1960s, of an East German literary movement which brought writers and intellectuals into the factories to experience the life of an ordinary worker: the idealism of the early days. And finally Leipzig itself, my alma mater, the dirty, disintegrating "second" city in the heart of East Germany, the city its citizens like to call the "*heimliche Hauptstadt*" or secret capital, and which Christoph Hein, one of East Germany's most important writers, has renamed "city of heroes" because of its role in the recent "October Revolution." The moment I get out of the train my nose is struck with the familiar mix of brown coal and sulphur fumes that characterize most of industrial East Germany.

I find that East German television is no longer recognizable. In the news that evening there are images from the last three months that have changed the face of Europe: the Leipzig demonstrations, the Gorbachev visit, the Honecker resignation, the short and unhappy reign of Egon Krenz, the opening of the Wall—not to mention the other, equally breathtaking, events in neighboring countries: Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania. My friends and I watch, transfixed. At midnight we break out the champagne and go up onto the roof of the house. All of Leipzig is lit up with fireworks, the sky red, green, blue, and yellow, with smoke in the air and the sound of yelling and noisemakers. The sky all over town is lit up for more than thirty minutes by thousands of private fireworks displays. It is the New Year's Eve equivalent of People Power. All the celebrations seem to say: this year will be different from any year that has ever been—but how? As the fireworks and noise begin to subside, we hear the ambulances around town begin to do their work.

Yet the celebratory atmosphere of New Year's Eve in Leipzig is not typical. Most of the days there are gray, wet, and full of uncertainty. The euphoria of the fall has long since worn off. One person I spoke with characterized the new mood as euphoric depression. I had expected to find a people overjoyed that the authoritarian regime under which they lived for forty years had collapsed overnight. Instead I found fear and uncertainty, the foreboding sense of impending disaster. In October and November the opposition in East Germany had been talking about democratic socialism, East German sovereignty and independence, and solidarity with the other peoples of Europe. Now, in the first days of the new year, there is a growing sense of impatience and frustration, even of despair. The government had opened up the Wall in the expectation that once people were free to travel they would no longer turn their backs on East Germany for good. That gamble had failed. East Germans were still continuing to leave the country at a rate of well over a thousand a day, and everywhere there were signs of gaps and failures in the economy: closed stores and restaurants, insufficient hospital personnel, long lines. There is impatience and bitterness in the air. Now that they have seen the wealth of West German society for themselves, East Germans want to own it right away. No talk of socialism or a just society here. The people are angry, and they want what the Germans in the West have. Why should they have had to pay for Hitler's crimes for the last forty years just because they were born on the wrong side of the Elbe?

Reunification as the coming of Santa Claus: that is the spirit I feel in those dark solstice days in Leipzig. Not ordinary nationalism or solidarity with the West—just the sense that once reunification has officially occurred there will be a Mercedes in every driveway and a driveway for every family; a dishwasher in every kitchen; clean air above the cities; good, expensive clothing on every body; and kiwis and oranges in every mouth. We want the opposite of what we have now, and we want it right away: that is the mood. No sense of the dangers and difficulties inherent in reunification; no sense of how to get there. East Germany is long on goals and short on means.

There are no Vaclav Havels or Lech Walesas to take over the

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reigns of power. The only consistent opposition had come from within the church, but the church was not about to abandon its role in the other world for an exclusive role in this one. Hence there is a sense of vertigo, of staring into a vacuum in the heart of Europe. The problems are enormous and of a very technical, complex nature: What does unification or reunification really mean? How to achieve a market economy but maintain social justice? What about currency reform? Unemployment? The environment? The three hundred thousand Soviet troops still stationed here? What if there is a coup in the Soviet Union and Gorbachev is overthrown? What about the other countries of Europe? How do *they* feel about reunification? Was it even possible to get *there* from *here*? I remember Brecht's saying: "After the struggles of the mountain come the struggles of the plain."

A brief trip to Prague to visit a Czech friend who had defected five years earlier and only recently returned for his first visit back illustrated the many differences between the two countries. Of course the problems in Czechoslovakia were also enormous. But there was a sense of unity in opposition. Vaclav Havel's face was everywhere: he was a superstar. One graffito I saw declared in Czech: "We are happy!" I could not imagine such a slogan in East Germany. The Czech people and the Czech opposition were one. The East German people and the East German opposition were separate. The opposition in East Germany tended to be more receptive to the idea of German division and to some kind of socialism with a human face. The East German people wanted nothing so abstract: they wanted material goods.

There was something peculiar about the whole thing: in October and November no one had called for reunification. The opposition had put their necks on the line, bravely calling for a new and free East Germany. But now it was as if all the vast masses, the majority who had been silent before, had finally gotten the courage to announce that what they really wanted was—personal comfort. It was not a terribly uplifting experience.

Along with the frustration went the growth of xenophobia and racism, especially anti-Polish feeling because of the Poles who bought goods cheaply in the East and sold them for higher prices in the West. I felt during my stay that I was witnessing the melting of a forty-year-old glacier. As it melted, all sorts of nasty creatures that had been frozen began to come alive again in changed circumstances, strange and ugly reminders of a more brutal, primitive time. The first thing East Germany would have to do if it were to become a decent society, I thought, was to come to terms with its past—not only the Stalinist past but the Nazi past. "We have never been able to take matters into our own hands," a friend of mine said. "First it was the Nazis, and then it was the Stalinists. Now the moment we have a bit of freedom we want to surrender it again to Helmut Kohl." This was polemically put, but it caught the essence of the situation. Politics in East Germany had been legal for a little over two months now, and already people were sick of it.

On January 8, the first Monday night demonstration of the new year was held in Leipzig. I had returned from Prague and

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attended. Over the last four months these demonstrations had become the real source of power in East Germany. It was on Monday, October 9, 1989, that the real break had occurred in East German history. On that Monday, two days after the fortieth anniversary celebrations of the founding of the republic, Erich Honecker had ordered troops to carry out a "Chinese Solution" in Leipzig and shoot the demonstrators. The troops had not done this. To this day no one really knows why. Ten days later Erich Honecker was out and the slippery slide into a new kind of society had begun.

The Monday night demonstrations had actually evolved out of peace services held every Monday night at one of Leipzig's most beautiful old churches, the church of St. Nicholas where Bach used to perform his works. On this Monday, there were one hundred and fifty thousand demonstrators on the Leipzig ring. In a way, the demonstration was typical of the situation in East Germany as a whole. The change had been brought about originally by small groups of dedicated people, but it had quickly grown beyond them and their abilities to steer it. The opposition had refused to take part in the demonstration on this Monday night because it was afraid of the responsibility, and so there was no speaker and no rally: just a formless mass of marchers around the Leipzig ring and in Karl Marx Square, from many different parties and with many different perspectives. Most were calling for unification, and almost all were directed against the Communist party and fears of a restoration of power by the old regime. The mass was directionless, formless: almost as if they were waiting for someone to tell them what to do and where to go. No one ever did, and in the end the crowd disintegrated and drifted off into the night. I wondered how long it would be before someone volunteered to give them a direction to march in.

I returned to East Berlin and at the *Deutsche Staatsoper* in East Berlin Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* was playing. The building is old and intimate, designed under Frederick the Great and rebuilt after the war in its original splendor. The acoustics were marvelous and the music beautiful, and the second part of the third act was electrifying. Wagner had written it as a glorification of German art and reconciliation between the nobility and the burghers. It is full of pageantry and poetry. As Hans Sachs, the poet-cobbler at the heart of the opera, began to sing about German art and honesty, there was an electric tension in the concert hall. Despise the dishonest and the non-German, Sachs says, and be reconciled to what is real and true and German. At the end of the last strains the applause was overwhelming. The audience got to its feet and cheered wildly. Finally, finally, one had the sense that they were proud to be Germans again. After the performance I asked a friend if that kind of response would have been possible before the opening of the Berlin Wall on November 9. "No," he said quite simply. As I had felt on the airplane the day of my arrival, I got the sense of being in a historical echo chamber.

The next day was my last in East Berlin. With my friends I toured the old city center, taking a look once again at the monuments and markers that remain after wars and revolutions of Berlin's 753 years of evolution from a barren marsh to a divided city. After a hearty lunch I crossed what was still the border with two East German friends, and we spent part of that evening using hammer and chisel trying to chip away bits of the Wall from the western side. It was easier said than done, because the Wall is a well-built structure. But we finally came away with some adequate pieces, covered with graffiti and dirt.

The American I met on the plane coming back to the U.S. owned no movie theater and had no Camcorder, but he was carrying pieces of Germany with him: several suitcases full of the Wall, which he intended to sell in malls and curiosity shops in the U.S. at a big profit. He had made $5,500 in December selling to the Christmas crowd, and he figured he would make at least as much this time. I asked him if he was going to declare the Wall at customs, but he said no. Back in New York, I did not wait to see what happened. I had made so many journeys *through* the Wall that I was not particularly eager to find out what it would be like to travel *with* the Wall, undeclared.

I am expecting my first East German guests in the summer, with or without the Wall. At this point it is an open question whether they will arrive here as East German friends, or simply as Germans. The future is open as it has never been in my or their lifetime—for better or for worse. □

Michael Cadnum

The Martian Landscape

The curry powder slope
lifts, falls. The sky is rust, the field
scattered with stones. It is day,
and each stone spills a second stone
of shadow. How little it seems to need

to be beautiful. It needs nothing.
Pictures in a book easily put back
on the shelf. But it is the truth:
a world can be empty.
Empty of pretense. Not even
unloving. Like triumph.
People are air and water,
and this place, with neither,

is where no one has ever died.
Our lives are full, we think.
So full we cannot rest.
The lander casts a shadow, too,
bending and straightening.
We know nothing.

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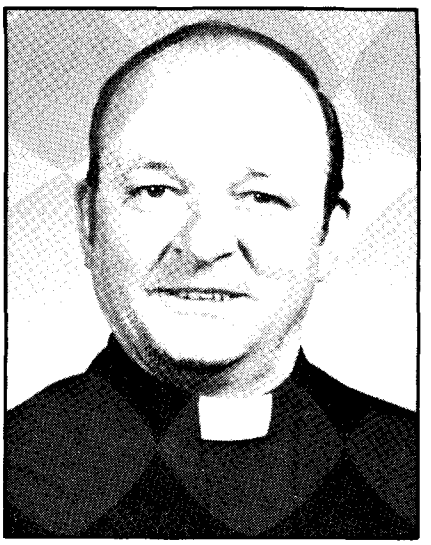

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STEPHEN HAWKING & THE MIND OF GOD

A BRIEF HISTORY OF 'A BRIEF HISTORY OF TIME'

CHET RAYMO

The longevity of Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (Bantam) on international best-seller lists is itself a phenomenon worthy of scientific investigation. As I write, the book has been on the American list for more than ninety weeks. For a work on relativity and quantum physics to achieve this distinction is unprecedented.

Hawking is a physicist with a particular interest in cosmology. He has achieved theoretical insights of remarkable originality, particularly with regard to the quantum physics of black holes. In *A Brief History of Time* he describes his personal discoveries within the context of our current understanding of the origin, evolution, and ultimate fate of the universe.

Hawking interprets modern cosmology with admirable clarity, but his book is hardly a "gripping" read. So what accounts for the book's extraordinary popular appeal? Some uncharitable critics have suggested that *A Brief History of Time* is more a publicity event than a book, that it is bought but not read, and that its main value is as a coffee-table status symbol. Best sellers do have a way of generating their own aura of irresistibility, but, in the case of Hawking's book, this can hardly be the whole story.

I would suggest several reasons for the popularity of *A Brief History of Time*. The first and most obvious is Hawking himself. Stephen Hawking suffers from ALS, or motor neuron disease, commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease. His body is almost totally disabled. He is confined to a wheelchair and speaks and writes with the help of a computer and voice synthesizer. Within this incapacitated body is contained a remarkably capacitated mind, some would say the most brilliant theoretical mind since Einstein. Hawking was born on the anniversary of Galileo's death and holds Isaac Newton's chair as Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge University. He is a fitting successor to those illustrious explorers of the cosmos.

For many people, Hawking's physical trial and intellectual triumph confirms the primacy of mind over matter, of optimistic spirit over debilitating misfortune. (Hawking himself might merely use the words "lucky" and "unlucky.") Purchasing Hawking's book may be a conscious or unconscious way of paying homage to the inspiring courage of the man.

But there is more. Professor Hawking's reputation has exploded beyond his physics to make him a revered icon of our time. We are seduced by his achievement into believing that whatever he has to say on any topic must be worth listening to—even as Newton was pressed into public service as Master of the Mint and Einstein was sought out to be Israel's head of state.

In this regard, I am put in mind of an anecdote described by New Age guru Shirley MacLaine in her book *Going Within: A Guide to Inner Transformation* (Bantam). MacLaine goes on pilgrimage to Cambridge to interview Stephen Hawking. She seeks wisdom. Hawking, characteristically, asks for a kiss. After some chatty preliminaries, MacLaine asks if the harmonic energy of the universe is "loving."

"I don't know that there is anything loving about energy," says the wheelchair-bound professor, via his computerized voice-synthesizer. "I don't think loving is a word I could ascribe to the universe."

"What is a word you could use?" wonders MacLaine.

"Order," replies Hawking. "The universe is well-defined order."

CHET RAYMO *is professor of physics at Stonehill College and a science columnist for the* Boston Globe. *His most recent book is* In the Falcon's Claw: A Novel of the Year 1000 *(Viking).*

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MacLaine persists: "So the question becomes how we define order in relation to how we see ourselves and our behavior?"

"Maybe," replies Hawking. "What do you mean?"

What do you mean, indeed. There is not much chance for a meaningful dialogue in this encounter between latter-day shaman and bemused physicist. MacLaine lives in a world of penny miracles. Chants, crystals, *chakras*, channelers, and clairvoyants: These are the instruments of her dreamy conjurations. Hawking, on the other hand, modestly admits to only one miracle, the universe itself, and even that may be something less than miraculous. His meditations are mathematical.

What the actress and the professor have in common is they both sell lots of books. Apparently, both authors have something to say (or are perceived to have something to say) that the public wants to hear. And indeed they explicitly assert the same goal—to know how the universe works and the role we play in it. It is a goal of formidable dimension, and if either book provides the answers, it deserves long tenure on the best-seller list.

Professor Hawking lists three possibilities in the search for the ultimate meaning of the universe: (1) There is an ultimate theory describing the universe that we will one day discover, if only we are clever enough (for Hawking that theory will be mathematical, the so-called GUT, or Grand Unified Theory so vigorously sought by physicists); (2) there is no ultimate theory, only an infinite sequence of theories describing the universe in ever greater detail; or (3) the universe is random and arbitrary, with no more than occasional fleeting and accidental patterns of meaning.

Both Stephen Hawking and Shirley MacLaine express a preference for Option 1, which may account for their popularity. MacLaine asserts her preference for Option 1 emphatically; the professor is more tentative. Tentativeness, of course, is one thing that separates science from New Age sorcery (or, for that matter, from Old Age religion). Hawking salts his speculations with words like "maybe," "if," "perhaps," and "probably." He knows we are still a long way from knowing *how* the universe works, much less *why* it works.

However, concludes Hawking, if we ever do discover an ultimate theory, it should be possible in time for anyone to understand it. Then we can get on with the discussion of *why* it is that we and the universe exist. "If we find the answer to that," he says, "it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason for then we would know the mind of God."

The mind of God! Hawking's frequent use of the G-word is one thing that distinguishes his book from other popular works on contemporary cosmology by physicists (there have been dozens in recent years). Might that too be a component of the book's allure?

Great physicists make unsteady philosophers, and even unsteadier theologians. Whatever the hopes of readers who come to the book looking for theological insights, Hawking's invocation of God's name most often records God's absence. Indeed, Hawking's own labors as a theoretical physicist might seem to restrict ever more severely any actual or potential role for a divine being. His illustrious predecessor as Lucasian Professor confined God's role in the universe to that of a Great Clockmaker who set the world going and then retired from his creation. By proposing a universe that has no boundary in space or beginning in time, Hawking removes even the need for a Creator.

The essence of Professor Hawking's natural theology is this: God's mind is identical with a plan of creation of stunning simplicity and generality, the so-called Grand Unified Theory. We have caught, he believes, many essential elements of that plan, and now stand at the threshold of the Grand Design itself.

But the professor's engaging invitation to know God's mind is a bait-and-switch come-on, for in the end God's thoughts turn out to be couched in the language of mathematical physics. The translation into ordinary English (no matter how artfully done) means something essential is lost.

Few of us are capable of reading the Grand Design in the language in which it is written. This relative inaccessibility of modern cosmological thought is surely one reason for the rampant popular interest in those pseudosciences and New Age quackeries that seem to offer the aura of science with none of the drudgery. Many readers of *A Brief History of Time* will probably give up somewhere about page 25, when the discussion reaches non-Euclidean space-time. The promise of an easy path to God's mind soon gives way to a quasi-mathematical thicket of superstrings and black holes.

If God's mind, as reflected in Grand Unified Theories, resides beyond the bounds of our comprehension (and therefore full appreciation), is there anything left to draw us to the book? Yes. Hawking tells an immensely satisfying tale of his own intellectual development, and the story nibbles at the margins of larger questions of admittedly theological interest.

The story begins with black holes and the fate of stars. In a normal star, in the prime of its life, the contractive force of gravity is balanced by an outward pressure caused by thermonuclear fusion occurring at the core. Energy produced by fusion (similar to what happens in a hydrogen bomb explosion) makes the star shine. When the energy resources at the star's core are depleted, gravity gets the upper hand and the star collapses upon itself. If the star is sufficiently massive—roughly eight times as massive as the sun—no known force can resist the gravitational collapse. The star gets smaller and denser until not even light escapes the irresistible tug of gravity; the star becomes a black hole. Within the region of blackness the star continues to collapse until it becomes infinitely small and infinitely dense—what mathematicians call a *singularity*—and the equations of physics break down.

According to our present understanding, the universe itself began as an explosion from a mathematical singularity about 15 billion years ago. Mass, energy, space, and time came into existence with the explosion. Until recently, physics had nothing to say about what came before the big bang. It seemed that the universe came into existence at a moment in time, full of the rich potential that would lead to the universe we enjoy today. Here, certainly, was work worthy of a Creator, and some incautious theologians lost no time exclaiming how modern physics here served to confirm theological doctrine.

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But the attempt to find confirmation for theology in the gaps or singularities of physics has always been a risky business, and no less so on this occasion.

The discovery that established Professor Hawking's scientific fame was to show that when quantum physics is applied to black holes they turn out to be not so black after all. Indeed, given enough time, all of the energy contained within any black hole will evaporate. In effect, the application of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle blurs the boundaries of a black hole, allowing radiant energy to appear outside the region of "irresistible" gravity.

Now the justly famous professor from Cambridge turned his attention to the ultimate singularity—the big bang, the beginning. Hawking relates how his interest began to shift from black holes to the origin and fate of the universe when in 1981 he attended a conference on cosmology organized by the Jesuits at the Vatican. He writes: "The Catholic church had made a bad mistake with Galileo when it tried to lay down the law on a question of science, declaring that the sun went around the earth. Now, centuries later, it had decided to invite a number of experts to advise it on cosmology. At the end of the conference the participants were granted an audience with the pope. He told us that it was all right to study the evolution of the universe after the big bang, but we should not inquire into the big bang itself because that was the moment of Creation and therefore the work of God."

One wonders how accurately Professor Hawking remembers what transpired at the papal audience, but the pope's purported advice raises interesting questions, particularly with regard to Hawking's own theoretical work on the big bang. It also raises questions regarding the proper relationship between science and theology.

Pope John Paul II has expressed his views on science and theology in a letter that stands as a preface to a volume of papers that emerged from a Vatican conference marking the 400th anniversary of the publication of Newton's *Principia mathematica* (*Physics, Philosophy and Theology: A Common Quest for Understanding*, edited by Robert J. Russell, William Stoeger, S.J., and George Coyne, S.J., University of Notre Dame Press and Vatican Press). Wrote the pope: "Science can purify religion from error and superstition; religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes." He continues: "The unprecedented opportunity we have today is for a common interactive relationship in which each discipline retains its integrity and yet is radically open to the discoveries and insights of the other."

If the pope did indeed suggest that theoretical physicists should not inquire into the big bang, that hardly qualifies as radical openness. And it is exactly here—the singularity of the moment of creation—that Professor Hawking's theoretical investigations are of relevance, for on this question his expertise is unsurpassed. His insights are the crux of the story told in *A Brief History of Time*.

Drawing upon his investigations of stellar black holes, Hawking applied the laws of quantum gravity to the universe itself, especially at the first moment of creation when the entire universe can be thought of as a black hole singularity. Here matters are very much more speculative, but the theories suggest interesting conclusions, among them the possibility that the universe did not have a beginning in time. Quantum physics blurs the boundaries of creation as it blurs the boundaries of collapsed stars.

Certainly, Hawking makes no dogmatic claim for the truth of this insight. To qualify as science, any theory for the origin (or nonorigin) of the universe must make predictions that can be tested against experience. At present, no ensemble of observations elucidates the precise nature of the big bang. But future observations and theoretical investigations will undoubtedly have much to say about the "moment of creation," and no physicist worth his salt will place the big bang off-limits for theological reasons.

In this respect, Pope John Paul II's further remarks on the relationship of science and religion are relevant. He cautions theologians against making "uncritical and hasty use for apologetic purposes of such recent theories as that of the 'big bang.'" This is good advice for theologians, and good advice too for readers of *A Brief History of Time*. Cosmologies change. Today's theories may seem quaintly old-fashioned to the physicists of the next century. In spite of Hawking's teasing invitation to behold the mind of God, no one should refer to his book for enlightenment about God's role in the universe. On such questions the Cambridge professor is probably no more (or less) reliable than Shirley MacLaine.

What Hawking does reveal, and admirably so, is a universe of wondrous complexity and simplicity, a proper stimulus for wonder and awe. Perhaps what the book best illustrates is the inspiring power of the unfettered human mind to comprehend patterns of order that permeate creation, from the level of the fundamental particles to the distant quasars and big bang.

And what of ultimate meaning? Of the three options listed by Professor Hawking, I find myself leaning toward Option 2 (there is no ultimate theory of the universe, only an infinite sequence of theories that describe the universe in ever greater detail), and I am therefore distrustful of any claims to know the mind of God, now or in the future, whether offered by New Age gurus or theoretical physicists. Instead, I am content to enjoy Steven Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* for just what it is—an engaging personal account of a brilliant mind at play.

In the end, what is most attractive about *A Brief History of Time* is not the theology or philosophy (which are treated with wry humor), or even the physics (which will be almost impenetrable for the nonscientist), but the ingenuous first-person narrative regarding the author's participation in the remarkable theoretical discoveries he describes. Hawking says that his goal as a physicist is "to know the mind of God." Watching the plan for creation take shape in Hawking's mind may be as close as many of us come to participating in God's thoughts. □

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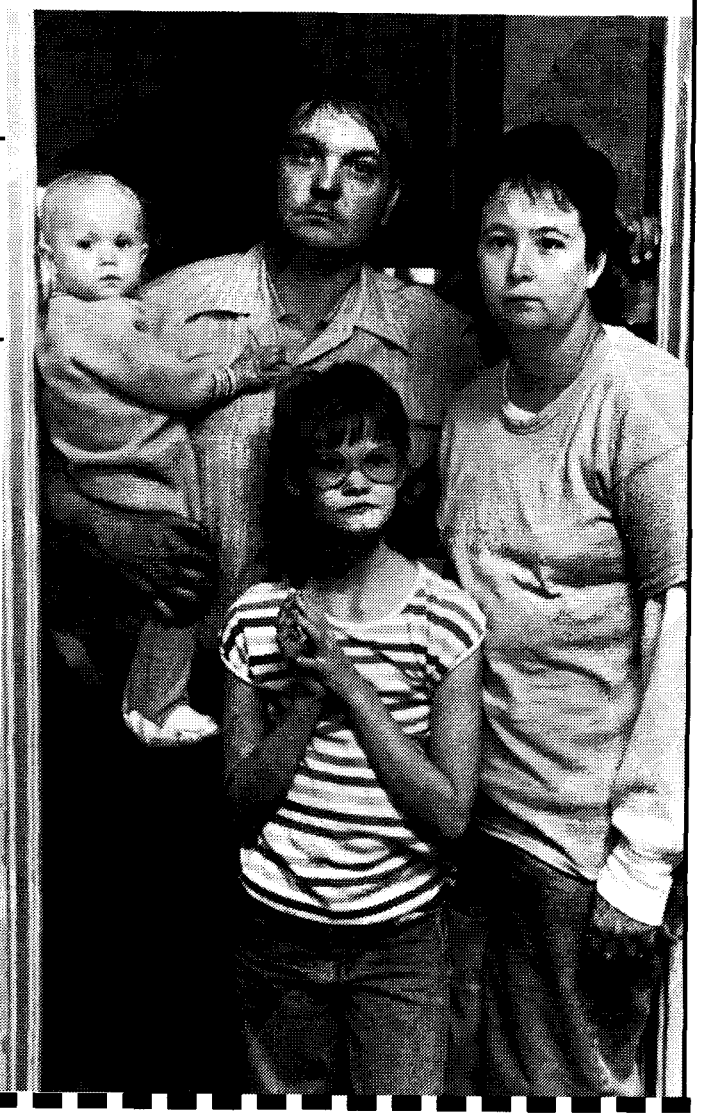

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SCREEN

A WEALTH OF GRACES

'LEFT FOOT' & 'PARADISO'

The poor, absurdly prolific, Irish working-class Catholic family Christy Brown grew up in would seem to be as constricting and stultifying as the cerebral palsy that crippled his body and distorted his speech. Or at least that's easily enough said before seeing director Jim Sheridan's wondrous *My Left Foot*, the Academy Award-nominated film taken from Brown's autobiography.

Like refugees in steerage, Christy's unnumbered brothers and sisters, his hard-drinking, quick-tempered father, and his overworked, superstitious mother are packed into a dingy row house in Dublin. Privacy is an unknown luxury in a house where children sleep five or six to a bed. Money is an uncertain prospect given their father's belligerent pride. By any progressive or enlightened standard, the Browns are economic and social liabilities. Yet this fervently traditional household, where a wife does not contradict her husband and dutifully steps aside when he threatens to beat his children, is not only teeming with life but teems with *life* itself. An unquestioned allegiance binds the family together, and somehow out of this seemingly meager mixture of raw poverty, chronic disappointment, and stubborn human faith, spontaneity and affection abound. As a child Christy must seek refuge under the staircase, partly to make sure he is not trampled underfoot. But his physical and suspected mental incapacity are no obstacle to his inclusion in the family. His place is unquestioned, and what is demanded of others is equally demanded of him. A wealth of graces flows from such forbearance.

My Left Foot does not camouflage the cost of poverty or ignorance, just as it does not turn away from the grotesque and demeaning aspects of cerebral palsy. But neither does it adopt the popular sentimentality that writes off lives blighted by social, material, or physical handicaps. There is not an ounce of pity or piety in the movie's treatment of Christy's affliction, and in this way he emerges as a fully human character, not a case study in spiritual encouragement. *My Left Foot* is not an invalid's hagiography, but the story of a man's life. Like any other person, Christy struggles to overcome pride and disappointment. In doing so his contorted body seems to become an almost visible expression of his soul—indeed, of everyman's soul.

Daniel Day-Lewis, as most critics have noted, gives a miraculous performance as the adult Christy. Few dramatic confrontations in memory rival the scalding emotional warfare of Christy's doomed declaration of love for his doctor and the violent recriminations that follow. Lewis gives no quarter, and as his head pounds the table you fear his whole body will somehow come apart in anguish. You will not see a more ardent lover in any bedroom scene.

Lewis is not alone. Less flamboyant but equally imposing is Brenda Fricker, who plays Christy's uncomplaining mother. Ms. Fricker is large-boned and sturdy, and she gives a large-souled performance. She gives perfect physical expression to an earthy mixture of maternal affection and stern motherly wit. On this rock, Christy Brown's story is built, his life reclaimed. Ray McAnally ("A Very British Coup") plays Christy's father with his customary understated power. Brown is an arbitrary Old Testament patriarch, and his crippled but fulminating son inherits a good measure of his father's temperament.

Director Sheridan fills his movie with indelible, essentially iconic moments, from the footsteps echoing in the hospital corridor as the father arrives to hear news of the troubled birth to Christy's improbable instigation of a brawl at the local pub. Sheridan has a masterly touch and a sure sense of what to leave unsaid. Sly wit informs nearly every scene, and wit, after all, is often the best revenge.

Fair warning: you may go into insulin shock after watching Giuseppe Tornatore's *Cinema Paradiso*. A few sweets never hurt anyone, but, as your mother used to say, there are limits.

Cinema Paradiso's worst sin is a precious elegiac tone. Director and writer Tornatore has a weakness for the fulsome poignant moment that Frank Capra would admire. The music pulsates achingly; the sun-bedazzled Sicilian town is oh-so pristine and pastel; Mama is lovingly abusive; the local padre agreeably daffy and forever scandalized. Village life is intrusive, yes, but essentially benign. Tornatore infuses this fertile atmosphere with an appealing wistfulness. The spiritual lethargy, however, is closer to the ennui felt after a long day at the beach than to the frustrating constraints of provincial life or the ambiguities of leaving home and family.

All of this said, Tornatore's pipe dream of a movie works its way under your skin, luxuriantly enfolding you in the life of its hero. Even those allergic to sweets will find *Cinema Paradiso* hard to resist, especially given the movie's brilliant and exultant ending.

In the beginning our hero, known as Toto (Salvatore Cascio), is an adorable but mischievous little boy with large brown eyes. Toto is drawn to the makeshift local moviehouse like a pony to sugar cubes. In the darkened precincts of this notorious "pleasure dome" he sits in hypnotic devotion. Not even his dreams

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promise as much as these evanescent images of exotic places and melodramatic romance. At home his beautiful young mother, like Penelope, faithfully awaits the return of her husband from the war. Toto finds a surrogate father of sorts in Alfredo, the simple but decent projectionist at the movie house. A restless, clever boy, Toto gives Alfredo no end of misery. They adore each other. Philippe Noiret, the venerable French actor, is unaffected as the hapless projectionist.

Tornatore builds his story with great, if sometimes wearying patience. One colorful transparent drama is laid over another until the canvas is suffused with emotional life. At the moviehouse, like in the church, the history of the village is enacted. In the early years, the local priest is given a private screening of each new movie. He sees to it that any hint of licentiousness is excised. As one villager later complains, "I haven't seen a kiss in twenty years." In the projection room, the shaggy, obedient Alfredo cuts out the offensive pictures and then splices the film back together. Toto rummages through these discarded treasures, taking the strips of film home for further review. His hoard of transparent images becomes a tangible symbol of his inchoate longings and ambitions.

Life in this Sicilian postcard, with its congenial village idiot, Catholic folk pieties, and palpable Mediterranean sensuality is very seductive indeed. Here ordinary men and women retain a dignity conspicuously absent in the mass modern society pressing in on every side, but which beckons irresistibly from the movie screen. *Cinema Paradiso* follows Toto's life as he accedes to the job of projectionist, suffers the operatic pangs of first love, and ultimately follows the dream of the movies beyond the known horizon. Memory, longing, and loss are lovingly entwined and beautifully evoked. Tornatore has wit and a sure comic sense. If *Cinema Paradiso* never quite earns its voluptuous melancholy, it still enchants.

In some innocent way, *Cinema Paradiso* wants us to believe that life is indeed just like in the movies. It smothers you with kisses, and that is not an entirely unpleasant sensation.

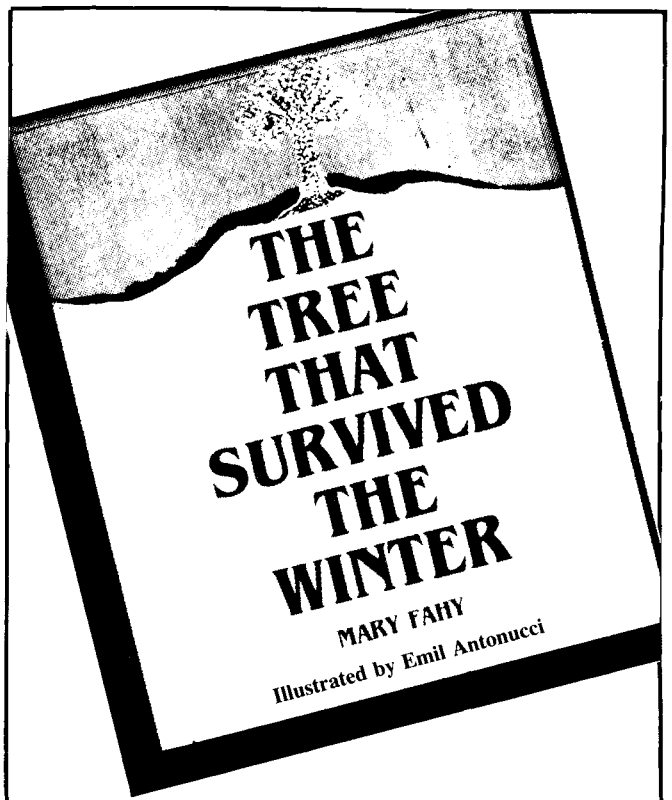
PAUL BAUMANN

STAGE

PRYING OPEN THE PAST

WELLMAN'S 'CROWBAR'

Mac Wellman's *Crowbar* is the first production I have seen of En Garde Arts, which was founded in 1985 to produce site-specific pieces, often performed outside where passers-by can become part of the audience. I did see the script of Wellman's *Bad Penny*, one of the three *Plays in the Park* that En Garde Arts offered in Central Park last year. Although it has its fascinations on the page, the presumably accidental confluence of five strangers needs the Bow Bridge setting for which it was written. The Victory Theatre



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"This is a book for everyone. You may not feel you need it today, but someday, you or someone in your family or among your friends will pick it up, read it, and remember that they too have survived the winter. Very highly recommended.
—Millard Nachtway, SSC Booknews

"Every sentence, every phrase pulses with springtime joy in newly discovered life and draws us into the tree's and our own thrill to be alive and loved...
—John McCluskey, Missionary Institute London

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on 42nd Street was the setting and the subject of *Crowbar*.

The Victory was a derelict theater with a grand history when En Garde Arts moved in on it. It opened as the Republic in 1900 when Oscar Hammerstein presented *Sag Harbor*, James A. Herne's last play. David Belasco took over the theater in 1902, fancily renovated it, and renamed it after himself. When he moved on to 44th Street to the new Belasco Theatre, the Republic reclaimed its name and ran, first as a legitimate, then as a burlesque house until the early 1940s when, now the Victory, it became a movie theater. It declined to porn flicks and finally to abandonment. This history, told in slides and direct explanations, is part of what *Crowbar* is about, but this is not a simple celebration of a theater. The audience is grouped on the stage and at the front of the auditorium (stage right), while in the rest of the theater—the boxes, the aisles, the balconies—figures appear to assert that old show-business platitude—that all theaters are haunted.

Although the ghosts of Belasco and Hammerstein are on hand, for the most part these are not conventional theatrical ghosts—the great performers of the past. Wellman, who combed turn-of-the-century newspapers for deaths, has peopled—or rather ghosted—his piece with the victims of violence—murders, suicides, accidents that took place on or near the opening date of the Republic in 1900. The main performers play multiple roles or, more often, single figures whose identities keep shifting, changing from one victim to another. This mélange of half-told stories, carefully orchestrated confusions, presumably is allied to the changing nature of the theater, always itself under various guises. There is also an implied connection between disasters inside and outside the theater, between theatrical role-playing and unanchored identities. Mr. Rioso is a saxophone-playing guide, somewhat menacing in manner, who tries to introduce a blustering, solid-citizen character—under various names, having suffered various deaths—into the mysteries of theater. His assurance is shattered at the end, when the ghost of William Gorman (played by David Van Tieghem, who did the music for the piece) slams a crowbar down on stage, unmasking Rioso as a laborer who was killed during the Belasco renovations when a falling crowbar—dropped by Gorman—smashed his skull. This dramatic final moment grows out of nothing in the play—no line of narrative, at least—and gets whatever force it has from the theatrical gesture itself. It does explain the title for playgoers who like to know what titles mean.

At times the piece gets a little foolish. A chorus of ghosts, wearing costumes that suggest the Greek games at Bryn Mawr, tiptoes around the theater singing about "empty air" in a tune that kept suggesting the domestics' trippety-trip salute to Professor Higgins in *My Fair Lady*. Rioso appears, several times too often, in a remote corner of the theater as though surprise provides substance to the fairly obvious message he has to deliver. These do no real harm to the show which, whatever serious implications it has, is primarily an amusing game—"a theatrical fruit-basket turn-over," as Wellman called it in a program note.

The chief charm of the piece is the setting, the theater itself, a demirep of a building, plainly down-at-heels but with touches of past elegance still in place. Beyond the site, the best things are the long monologues provided by Wellman, a virtuoso mixer of wit, eloquence, and incoherence. Belasco has a lovingly detailed description of his theater, based on a real interview with Djuna Barnes. Since she did not become a journalist until 1913, he is probably talking about the 44th Street Belasco; not that that matters since the theater he is creating is visible only in his words. A woman sitting in a box—a dead actress apparently—has a slippery speech about time, death, sex, what have you which, as Elzbieta Czyzewska gave it, was oddly funny, strangely sensible. Best of all, was Nora Dunfee's first-nighter (the action ostensibly takes place during an intermission of the opening play), who begins by talking about *Sag Harbor*, speculating on what will happen when the play recommences; she indicates what she does not want to see in the rest of Herne's play, then in any play, then in theater for the ninety years since Herne's first-act curtain came down. It is a gem of a speech.

Crowbar was popular—probably to the surprise of everyone involved—and it was extended for two weeks beyond its original limited run. Even so, it will be gone by the time you read this. That is the trouble with site-specific productions, pieces for occasion. They cannot be reviewed or, if they are, they become something else in the process. Now that the crowbar has fallen, don't look for its ghost. Be on the lookout for something new from En Garde Arts; they are promising *Little West 12th Street* in June, a scripted tour of New York's meat-packing district.

GERALD WEALES

Michael Cadnum

The Beasts of the Field

By the church by the beck
there is always another place
where they stand

when the rain closes the sky
when the wind drags the rolls of wool
sun cold
they stand their eyes
take the world their cries
like doors opening

skittering slow
they are watching they hear
what we hear they see
as we see their hooves find

new places to stand
where nothing
has ever happened

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The sin of malign forgetfulness

NUCLEAR CATHOLICS AND OTHER ESSAYS
J.M. Cameron
Eerdman's, $21.95, 261 pp.

Dennis O'Brien

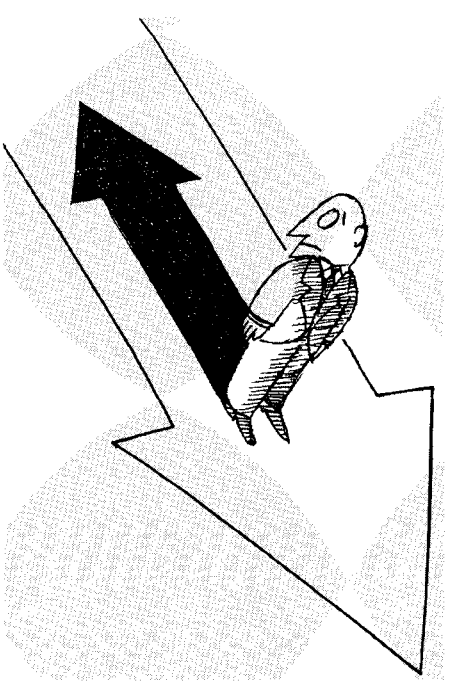
This is a very good book with a very bad title. "Nuclear" attached to "Catholic" in this instance has nothing to do with central Catholic values but with folk like Michael Novak who think that one can fashion a moral argument for a nuclear deterrent (even though Novak thinks it quite immoral to ever use such a deterrent). Cameron dispatches such arguments with wit and grace.

On the other hand, Nuclear (core) Catholic would be a very good title for what may at first appear a disparate collection of essays covering everything from the sexual revolution to Charles Dickens on angels. J.M. Cameron, professor emeritus at St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, has given us what philosophers are supposed to deliver: wisdom—and in my judgment, it is wisdom specially formed by a Catholic sense.

The publisher's blurb credits Cameron with sound application of moral principle to his range of subjects. True enough, but that can be as misleading as the atomic title. One might get the impression that contemporary thought lacks moral content. On the contrary, contemporary thought bristles with moral denunciation. Sexual revolutionists drop moral bombshells all over the civilized landscape—often taking special aim on churches and other traditional moralizing institutions like the family. Cameron's moral sense lies deeper than denunciation.

One might approach the underlying principle of all of Cameron's arguments by reading the first and the last essays together. The first—on fashionable sexual propaganda—is one which he now believes to be rather too "brisk," but it follows nonetheless from his marvelously sensitive and subtle analysis of "poetry and dialectic" which concludes the volume.

The essay on poetry rests ultimately on a now familiar modern philosophical argument against *private language*. This seemingly esoteric argument (originating with Wittgenstein) is finally aimed at "privatism" in all its forms and ramifications. Among the victims of privatism has been human emotional life. Our emotions are fancied to be some sort of ineffable inner sensations which are of inestimable value to us but totally incommunicable to others. Cameron shows clearly the absurdity of private language in general and goes on to defend poetry as the public vehicle by which we understand (at least in part) our own emotions and share the emotions of others. He sums up the argument as follows: "Talk about the inner life is always in terms of concepts made by us as embodied intelligences, not as intelligences contingently and—as has been thought—by misfortune connected to the bodies that we happen to have...."



The notion that the human mind is embodied, and that the body (and the talk about the body and its business) is not a mere bystander to inner sense, lies behind Cameron's dissection of sexual liberation. The essay is appropriately titled "Sex in the Head." It would seem that the basic argument of the sexual liberationist is that there is nothing wrong with any sexual behavior "but thinking makes it so." In sex, anything goes provided one has cheery thoughts. Commenting on Nancy Friday's view that sexual fantasy is a badge of women's liberation, Cameron remarks, "it doesn't seem to worry her that...[t]here are fantasies of rape, beating, violation by dogs... intercourse with statues." He concludes: "The sadness and triviality of this book are almost unbearable."

If mind is embodied, having cheery thoughts during intercourse with a statue will not be the sole measure of value. And how is mind embodied? In ritual, gesture, poetry, culture—in history. Cameron has no patience with ahistorical moral righteousness. He is incredulous at Rosemary Ruether's "*mean* view" of the past. Victorianism may be her watchword of neurotic depression, but Cameron reminds us that the nineteenth century was one of the great centuries of Western civilization. Others are merely careless. C.A. Tripp's *The Homosexual Matrix* repeats the claim that the Council of Mâcon debated whether women were human beings. A reference to Migne would show that *one* bishop raised the issue, the rest of them set him right.

At the conclusion of his favorable (but critical) analysis of Michael Walzer's *Just and Unjust Wars*, Cameron says that the

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book is "a powerful remedy for the malign forgetfulness from which we suffer." It is the sin of malign forgetfulness that Cameron lays against the age. Humanity emerges into history and dies from forgetfulness. Morality—sexual or otherwise—is not something made up inside one's head by positive feelings. Humane action sketches itself in history, in the historical inheritance of language, in our shared stories of love and betrayal. It is this deep sense of the givenness of history, the grace of past poetry, that makes me link Cameron to the Catholic sense of Newman—whose delicate balance between *pietas* toward the past and the novel problems of the present is the subject of the essay, "Newman, the Liberal." Newman and Cameron are both Catholic and liberal—a stance not much appreciated by either camp alone. □

STARVED FOR MEANING

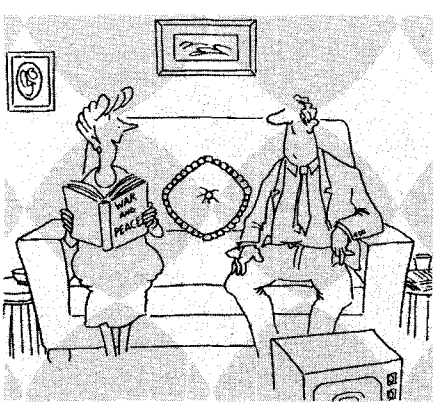
AN APPETITE FOR POETRY
Frank Kermode
Harvard University Press, $22.95, 242 pp.

Peggy R. Ellsberg

If you read Frank Kermode's prologue to *An Appetite for Poetry* first, as the order of printed books suggests you should, you might conclude that he is curmudgeonly and even contentious in his argument against much of the current practice and teaching of "literary theory." You might also agree with him. The lengthy (forty-six pages) prologue—erudite, irritable, amused, meticulously documented, deliberately paced—is a polemic that dismisses with sophisticated reason a number of eminent critics and academicians, and leaves the rest of us humbled and shaken. After this confrontational beginning, Kermode—one of England's most renowned literary critics—must prove that he can do better than the critics he castigates. He does not disappoint.

The volume is a collection of ten deeply learned and often brilliant essays on diverse literary and humanistic topics, including Milton in old age, Wallace Stevens in Connecticut, Freud, and others. Kermode refers to the inspired unity of the Bible (upon which he has produced much magisterial literary analysis) as "concealing behind its stories an occult plot which is a master version of the plot of our world." He is a rock-solid scholar who knows that the historian writing about the political crisis of 1658-1660 in a volume of the *Oxford History of England* was "exceptionally well acquainted with Milton's biography" (even though the historian mentions Milton only once in that volume). In an essay called "The Plain Sense of Things," he calls upon Eliot, Freud, Augustine, Northrop Frye, George Herbert, and the Psalms to make his point.

But what shines through in these delightful, profound, and moving essays is that Kermode is not simply a critic but also an artist. In an essay that ingeniously connects Wallace Stevens with Hölderlin and Heidegger, he writes that for Stevens the world was "a place of ease, of 'Berlioz and roses'..., of postcards from Cuba, tea from Ceylon—fortuities of earth that solace us and make a world, or...an angel of reality....There dwelt the poet, watching the shining of the commonplace...."



"It's even more remarkable when you think it was written before word-processors were invented."

The most fascinating essay in the book is "Divination," by whose title Kermode means making conjectures about the meanings of literature, "guessing by happy instinct or unusual insight." Kermode demonstrates here how happy and unusual his own abilities are in reading variations in literary texts from the Greek Bible to E.M. Forster. At the beginning of the essay, however, Kermode implies that though the divination of literature is at once subtle and straightforward, artful and plain—in short, a delicate balance between talent and common sense—modern literary theorists have usurped it as a concept with armaments of their own technology. "Now that everybody finds literary theory so much more interesting than literature," he says, "we must expect a certain amount of imperialist rapine."

So, with a sense of Kermode's love for poets, his soul-deep understanding of poetry and the wholeness of its projects, one can return to his prologue. Here, he initiates his remarks with the complaint that "Theory...maintains that the primary use of literature, however defined, is to serve the needs of Theory—indeed, the only reason for continuing the study of literature is that it can be pressed into this service." He points out that literary theorists, "despite their occupancy of well-endowed chairs...are engaged in a continual critique of legitimacy." (Likewise, I have noticed how often established university scholars—who regularly fill the middle of printed pages with typescript—are concerned with "marginality.") Kermode challenges the notion that literary theorists constitute an avant garde who will lead our generation out of anachronism, elitism, and error into a new, radical polity. In fact, Kermode dismisses the idea that teaching and writing about literature is political at all—he recalls "the days when the editors of *Tel Quel* supposed they could help with the revolution by turning up at the Renault factory and reading their pieces to the workers over lunch...." He also questions the assumption that literary theory, however radically intentioned, will ever do the real work of social justice that women, minorities, and gays require: "There are probably more effective ways of drawing attention to political injustice than by deconstructing Hegel and Freud."

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At the 1989 MLA convention in Washington D.C., a group of Native American poets and college teachers produced a panel of papers and poetry readings. Later, while the panel performed Native American folk songs, they passed around an Indian drum to collect money to help defray the considerable personal expense each had incurred to travel to the convention. "The MLA refused to fund this panel," someone pointed out, "because I think they had chosen to spend their allotment on another panel called 'Silence, Marginality, and Otherness in Native American Poetry.'"

Whether or not that is exactly how the MLA proceeded, the anecdote illustrates Kermode's contention that the current crisis in literary criticism is "a matter for urgent consideration and action." He believes that a possible consequence of current literary theory is the destruction of reading. A serious and intelligent respect for literature is a necessary antidote, and it must be reintroduced in university classrooms—for there alone, Kermode claims, is the desire to read acquired in modern times.

In *An Appetite for Poetry* we encounter writing of balance and decorum, and reading of unflinching audacity. □

INVENTING SECULARISM

SPINOZA AND OTHER HERETICS
Vol. 1: The Marrano of Reason
Vol 2: The Adventure of Immanence
Yirmiyahu Yovel
Princeton University Press, Vol. 1, $24.50, 244 pp; Vol. 2, $29.50, 225pp.; set, $45.

Michael Wyschogrod

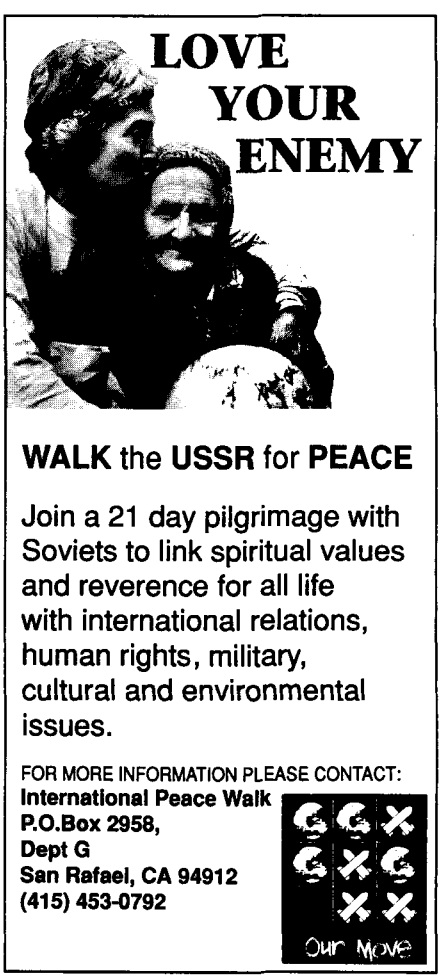
When the Amsterdam Jewish community excommunicated the twenty-four-year-old Baruch Spinoza in 1656, it referred to "the horrible heresies he practices" and "the awful deeds he performed." Unfortunately, we lack any further specification of what beliefs and practices the Amsterdam *Ma'amad* (Ruling Council) found so gravely objectionable as to warrant excommunication. Nevertheless, if Spinoza's views at age twenty-four were anything like the views he expressed in his writings later in life, the reason for the community's displeasure is not difficult to fathom.

According to Yirmiyahu Yovel, Spinoza was the philosopher of immanence. According to this philosophy, the natural order is the only and overall horizon of being, it is the only source of value and normativity, and absorbing this recognition is prerequisite for whatever emancipation human beings can attain. At the center of Spinoza's vision, as Yovel sees it, is the rejection of a world beyond that of the natural order. The historical religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) posit not only a super-natural order, but divine revelation as a source of knowledge. Spinoza's immanentism identifies the totality of nature with God and rejects a doctrine of creation, relying exclusively on reason as a source of human knowledge. As parts of nature, human beings are fully subject to nature's laws and any doctrine of freedom is rejected if freedom is interpreted to conflict in any way with the rule of law in a determined universe.

What brought Spinoza to such a secular and naturalistic philosophy? Yovel insists on emphasizing Spinoza's Marrano background. Marranos were Jews in Spain and Portugal who had been forcibly converted to Christianity. Many of them practiced Christianity outwardly but continued to practice some form of Judaism secretly. Sometimes this went on for generations. The Amsterdam Jewish community was largely made up of Marranos who had escaped from Spain and Portugal for the freedom of Holland where they lost no time in reverting to their ancestral faith which, in any case, many had only shed externally.

In recent years, considerable attention has been paid to the Marranos as pioneers of modernity. The Marrano situation was a complex one. Some Marranos took their Christian faith quite seriously and had no intention of returning to Judaism. Others started out as believing Christians and only gradually decided to return to Judaism, often because they found themselves considered Jews by the larger society in spite of their baptism. And still others never took their baptism seriously and were only waiting for the first opportunity to return to Judaism without endangering their lives (baptized Jews who secretly practiced Judaism were often burned at the stake in Spain and Portugal).

It is argued by Yovel and others that the Marrano experience predisposed many, including Spinoza, to a healthy dose of skepticism. We are dealing with people who were first Jews and then became Christians, thereby relativizing their Judaism. Then many became Jews again, thereby relativizing their Christianity. In short, by passing in and out of Judaism



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and Christianity, the Marranos found themselves distanced from both of these historical religions. It is not difficult to understand that such an experience would drive some to the safety of a secular, rational, and universalistic standpoint freed of the burdens of both Judaism and Christianity. Yovel embraces this thesis with great energy.

After devoting the first volume of his study to Spinoza and his background, in the second volume Yovel deals with figures such as Kant, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, all of whom he considers immanentist philosophers in the spirit of Spinoza. Their immanentisms are not, of course, all alike and Yovel points out the similarities and differences between the immanentism of each and that of Spinoza.

When the Hebrew version of this work appeared in Israel several years ago, it quickly became a best seller. Secular Israelis admire Spinoza who, according to Yovel, "took the first step in the eventual secularization of Jewish life by examining it empirically as a natural phenomenon subject solely to the forces of secular history." Modern Zionism, adds Yovel, "chose not to wait for transcendent or messianic redemption but to work for Jewish redemption within the course of secular history.... Zionism can be meaningful only if accepted as a development within secular history—and not as a mystical doctrine about an elect people led by God to its sacred land to the beat of the Messiah's drum."

It is here that we must distinguish between Yovel and Spinoza. Yovel is a secular Jew who very much wants to maintain his Jewish, Israeli, and Zionist identities. He is aware that traditionally Jewish identity was very closely linked to religion and he is therefore eager to obtain all the help he can get in legitimizing a Jewish identity without any religious commitments. He argues that "Judaism today is determined by the way actual Jews live it, and not by any one compulsory model."

But Spinoza was not shaping a secular Jewish identity, he was shaping a secular human identity. Under the heading "Elements of Spinoza's Jewish Self-Image," Yovel argues that in various ways Spinoza remained Jewish in a subjective sense. But this is entirely beside the point. Even if Spinoza's Jewish background influenced him in various ways, he was not a Jew in the sense that the continuation of the Jewish people was a matter of importance for him. Spinoza's loyalty was to reason and to a humanity without any artificial boundaries.

Spinoza is more consistent than Yovel. With belief in God's election of the Jewish people removed, Jewish survival cannot be a matter of ultimate concern. The will to Jewish national survival then takes its place among other nationalisms, most of which have not served humanity well in modern times. Spinoza's vision of a universal humanity seems to him a superior alternative and follows from his naturalistic and non-biblical premises.

Yovel shares Spinoza's premises but not his conclusion. The survival of the Jewish people, particularly as a sovereign nation in its own homeland, is a matter of profound importance to him. He never quite tells us why; it is simply a given. Though it is hard to reconcile with his naturalistic premises, it serves the cause of Jewish survival. It would be desirable if Yovel's commitment to the survival of the Jewish people were better grounded theologically. But loyalty to Jewish survival without good grounding is better than no loyalty at all. □

IN BRIEF

CATHOLICS USA: MAKERS OF A MODERN CHURCH, *by Linda Brandi Cateura, Morrow, $19.95, 336 pp.*

Linda Brandi Cateura, whose *Growing Up Italian* garnered a New York Public Library accolade in 1987, has another interview book, *Catholics USA*. In a period when the modernization of the church is, according to interviewee Alexander Haig, "the most anguishing challenge that it faces," Cateura presents a sampling of mostly prominent Americans across a wide spectrum of contemporary life who reveal their personal visions of the church and themselves in relation to it.

Among twenty-five interviews, Edward Kennedy talks of sometimes serving Mass with his son when they attend church in Hyannisport; J. Peter Grace discusses the rich man, the poor man, and the bishops' letter on the economy; Charles Curran offers a modest, well-reasoned position on authority; and Los Angeles Archbishop Roger Mahony, what is effectively a rejoinder. Though it may come as a surprise to many feminists, Jacqueline Wexler identifies mid-twentieth-century convents as "the precursors of what the women's movement was to call 'sisterhood.'"

Columnist Bill Reel analogizes the pre-Vatican II church to a slightly stodgy club: "You had 100 members, then you renew yourself and (twenty-five years later) you've got 30." Ruth McDonough Fitzpatrick, head of the Woman's Ordination Conference, foresees that in ten years "they are going to be ordaining women and married men and calling back the priests who left to get married."

One of the loveliest sources, at his best in insights into the nature of Hispanic religious life, is the Reverend Virgilio Elizondo, rector of the cathedral in San Antonio and founder of the Mexican-American Cultural Center (MACC). Elizondo sees the origins of liberation theology in the church's failures. "It is not anticlerical," he explains. "But the absence of the clergy has brought about a freedom of thought that gave people a desire to rethink what it means to be a Christian.... Western [Catholic] scholars are frightened by this." Apart from the problems of poverty, Elizondo asks, "How do we help people out of affluence? It may be the more profound question." Projecting us forward, Elizondo looks for a real "New World" in this hemisphere, a borderless America from Argentina to Canada.

Elizondo, Bishop John Ricard, and Charismatic Annemarie Schmidt experience a "dead" quality in mainstream American Catholic worship but find altogether different qualities in their own strains of liturgy. Elizondo's MACC has plumbed with professionals the psychological dimensions of the extraordinary joy found in the liturgical celebration of such suffering peoples as the Mexicans.

Among others interviewed are television's Mother Angelica; Frank Shakespeare, U.S. ambassador to the Vatican; gay activist Father John McNeill; Notre Dame president Edward Malloy; Mario Cuomo; and Andrew Greeley, who pinpoints preaching as the foremost of the problems in the church today: "A lot of priests are con-

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cerned about justice in the third world, but many less are concerned about justice to the parishioners."

Not just a mixed bag, Cateura's book serves up a smorgasbord of thinking about Catholicism, demonstrating a classic mark of the church, universality.

SUSANNE WASHBURN

REVIEWERS

DENNIS O'BRIEN *is president of the University of Rochester. His most recent book is* God and the New Haven Railway *(Beacon).*

PEGGY R. ELLSBERG *teaches in the English department at Barnard College.*

MICHAEL WYSCHOGROD *is professor of philosophy at Baruch College of the City University of New York and author of* The Body of Faith: God in the People Israel *(Harper & Row).*

SUSANNE WASHBURN *is a reporter/researcher for* Time *magazine.*

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 202)

Second, although Buber's philosophy acknowledges the possibility of our having an I-Thou relationship with nature, I can't envision him suggesting that this relationship be equivalent to companionship. Animistic implications aside, we treat companions as equals, we do unto them as we do unto ourselves. Sure, I water my plants (although I don't talk to them) and walk my dog, but I would sacrifice plants and dog to preserve my relationship with a human being.

Which brings me to my third point. The danger in focusing on our I-Thou relationship to nature is that we may reduce human relationships to I-It status. We have too much garbage because of overpopulation. Third world countries will never develop economically until they take birth control seriously. We need to discourage people from having too many children, but we need to do this not by pointing to environmental necessities but to the value of human life itself. This planet can sustain a finite number of people; probably we can figure out what that number is. But in deciding what steps to take in preserving ourselves by preserving our environment, we need to be companions to each other. With this kind of companionship, we are at least headed in the right direction.

THOMAS F. MADER

The authors reply:

Mr. Mader makes three points, which he describes as "quibbles" with our article. His first point is much more than a quibble; it is a direct rejection of our fundamental point. We urged a shift in perspective from envisioning non-human nature as *our* environment to recognizing it as *God's* creation. Thus, it is not our perception and appreciation that give nature significance. The primary perceiver of creation is the Creator. In the terms of Genesis 1, it is God who looks at nature and sees that it is good—and that before the human being is created. We urged a theocentric perspective; Mr. Mader's preference for an anthropocentric perspective is something quite different.

On Mr. Mader's second point, we certainly do not intend to equate plants and persons. But companionship is an analogous term. After all, we speak of God in

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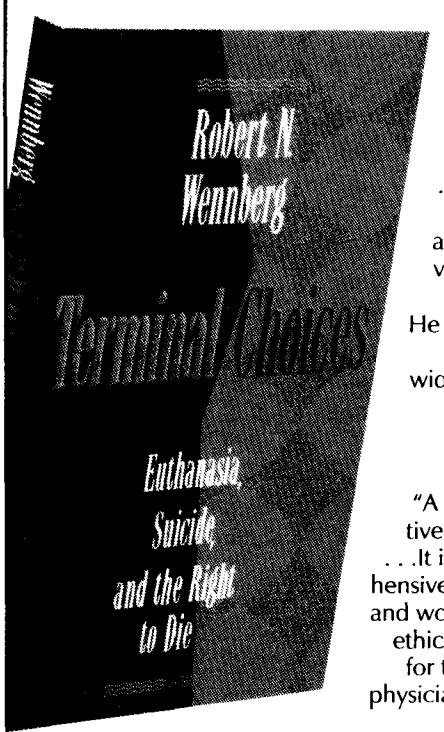

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terms of companionship, indeed in familial terms, without suggesting that God is a companion in the same way as another human being, or that God is a parent in the same way our fathers and mothers are. To call nonhuman creatures companions in finitude is both real and nonunivocal; that is what Thomas Aquinas meant by analogical.

Third, Mr. Mader expresses concern that extending the "I-thou" relationship to nonhuman beings may reduce our fellow human beings to "it." Obviously, that is not our intention and, were it likely, we would be very much opposed to it. Interestingly, Martin Buber feared the exact opposite. The danger, he suggested, is that human beings are more readily reduced to "it" when we decline to engage with nonhuman beings as "thou." We agree with Buber.

Finally, we are much less sanguine than Mr. Mader that we can determine the optimal or maximal number of human beings which the world can support.

MICHAEL J. HIMES & KENNETH R. HIMES

Women as priests

Fairfax, Va.

To the Editors: John Garvey's article ["Women's Ordination: Another Go at the Arguments", January 26] reminds me of a bishop who once said: "Give me a one-handed adviser. I keep getting told, 'On the one hand...on the other hand....'"

Please, Mr. Garvey, with all due respect, your patriarchalism is showing! When you consider Abraham, you neglect to mention Sarah. Perhaps she was the "angel" who stopped Abraham and spoke for God, as have many women down through the ages.

I am grateful that the article brings up the questions of the maleness of Jesus. The pope talks about it, as does Bishop Elden Curtiss in a recent reflection. They are trying to say that it was in the mind of Jesus to have the cult of the male priesthood.... They try to make us believe that the maleness of Jesus is integral to his being Christ.

Remember the button the Episcopalians sported before their 1974 ordinations in Philadelphia? "Ordain Women, or Stop Baptizing Them!" It is our most popular selling button today at the Women's Ordination Conference. If the pope and the

'Wouldn't you rather be astronauts?'

bishop really believe in the cult of the male priesthood, the question must be raised: "Did Jesus redeem only men?" Of course, their answer would be like the rest of their arguments, such as: "There were no women at the Last Supper, and that is why women cannot be priests." The pope actually said that during a trip to Scandinavia.... Where is the guest list? In the locked Vatican archives? Who served the meal? Who cleaned up? Who first announced the Good News? To whom did Jesus say, "Go tell what you have seen and heard!" With whom did Jesus sit and theologize while Martha complained and worked in the kitchen?

Garvey writes that there never have been women priests. My own eyes have seen early Christian wall paintings in the catacombs of Naples, Italy, depicting women presiding at the eucharistic meal. That is historical fact. The history just happened to be written by males. The women mentioned in Scripture must have been very exceptional women to have made it into the accounts at all. That is why today we try to remember to mention Sarah along with Abraham, Miriam with Moses, etc....

What is missing in John Garvey's article, is the reality of the experience that *women are called to the priesthood.* They should be able to have that call tested like any male. The church is impoverished because of the present situation. Women and men are deprived of ministry, although in many creative ways women are in fact ministering. It is just not recognized.

John Garvey seems to be trying to say, in effect, "A pox on both your houses. I have the middle-ground truth...let's go for women deacons!" The Women's Ordination Conference does not wish to see women ordained as deacons unless the celibacy question is dealt with as well as the question of opening the church to women to be present at the full meal, the entire table. The subject is shared decision making, and working in true mutuality between women and men in the church and the world. That is the message of Jesus. That is the gospel call. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza named it "A discipleship of equals."

The grandmother of our movement, Sister Elisabeth Carroll, R.S.M., once said, "What is the proper place for women in the church? The proper place for women in the church is everywhere!"

RUTH McDONOUGH FITZPATRICK

The writer is national coordinator of the Women's Ordination Conference.

Women as deacons

Allentown, Pa.

To the Editors: John Garvey's reflections on women's ordination [January 26] end with the suggestion that since "there was in both the Eastern and Western churches the order of women deacons," Rome ought to open (reopen?) the diaconate to women. At another point Garvey inquires (I hope not simply rhetorically): "But what argument could possibly be offered against women deacons?" May I offer the suggestion that Garvey read a book which seriously questions whether there ever were "women deacons" at any time or in any place in the early church? ....[It is] *Deaconnesses: A Historical Study,* by Aimé-Georges Martimort (Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1986; published originally in French by the Edizioni Liturgiche in Rome in 1982). The book's thesis, supported by a great deal of patristic and liturgical material, is that whatever the deaconesses were that were to be found in some parts of the early church, they were not deacons—not, that is, in holy orders as these were understood in the early church. There may be equally eminent patristic and liturgical scholars who disagree with Martimort's conclusions; since I have never come across a serious review of the book, I cannot say. Martimort con-

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cludes that women cannot be ordained to the diaconate; he also believes that a renewal of deaconesses would be extremely inadvisable. WILLIAM TIGHE

The writer is a member of the faculty of the department of history, Muhlenberg College.

The author replies:

It's too bad that the slogan "Ordain Women, or Stop Baptizing Them," is so popular. Like most bumper sticker-sized thoughts, it is simplistic to the point of being stupid. The great majority of men are not ordained to the priesthood, and it is assumed that they will not be; in the Roman Catholic church, no noncelibates are. But male children are baptized without being sworn over to the church's service. The assumption seems to be, once more, that ordination is a form of status or power, or a right. To the extent that it is seen that way it is a corruption and no Christian should seek it. It is also assumed that the call to ordination, for either men or women, comes from God. When people are quite sure that their strong feelings can be associated with a divine call I feel the same discomfort I felt when a fundamentalist woman told me that the Lord had told her to paint her house pink. No serious scholar I know of is as certain as Ruth McDonough Fitzpatrick seems to be that women once presided at the Eucharist, only to have that fact suppressed by male historians. Most find the catacomb paintings she refers to more ambivalent than that.

Since writing my column I have read Martimort's book on deaconesses, and I thank William Tighe for bringing it to my attention. It is a fascinating and careful work, and Martimort does indeed conclude that women should not be ordained to the diaconate. But the evidence in his book can allow of other interpretations. He concedes that there is a good deal of uncertainty about the use of women deacons in the early church and in various regions, and he cites a Syriac version of the *Didascalia* in which we find this: "The deacon stands in the place of Christ and you should love him. The deaconess should be honored by you as the Holy Spirit is honored."

The role of deacon and deaconess changed over the years, from the direct service of the needy mentioned in Acts to a liturgical role. There is no reason it needs to become static, or clericalized, today. My major point is that women once occupied important symbolic roles in the church which they no longer occupy, and it is a question which needs addressing.

JOHN GARVEY

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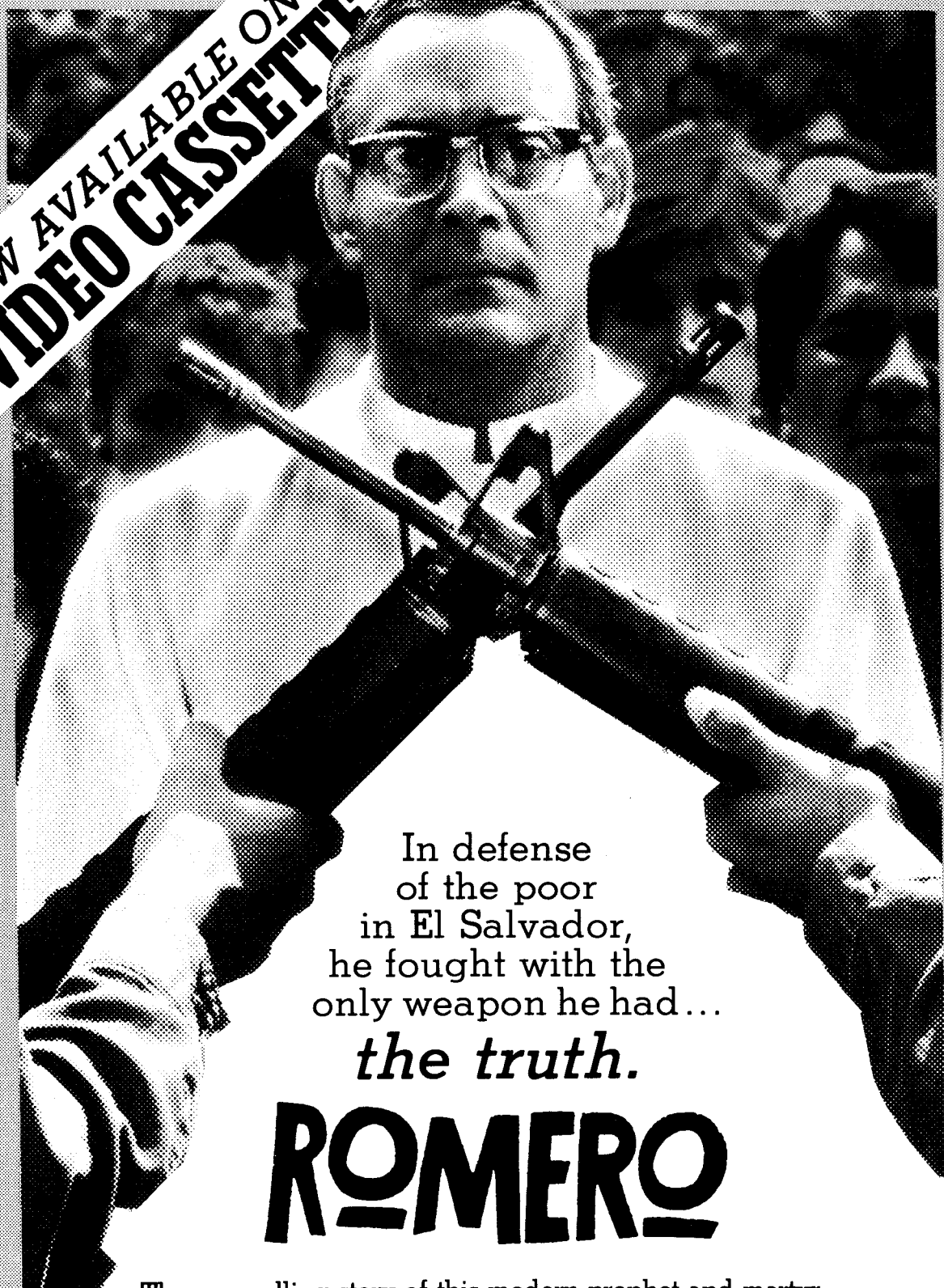

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